



Journal of
**MESSIANIC
JEWISH STUDIES**

CHARLES L. FEINBERG CENTER

Volume 1, 2015



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*The
Journal
of
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Jewish
Studies*

Volume 1
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The Journal of Messianic Jewish Studies

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Core Values

Theology:

We believe in the inerrancy of Scripture, the Triune nature of God and full deity and sinless humanity of Yeshua (Jesus) the Messiah, salvation through faith in Yeshua alone. We also believe that God is faithful to His covenants and promises to the Jewish people and in the importance of Jewish evangelism.

Editorial:

Our goal is to reflect the best of Evangelical and Jewish scholarship in our articles and to demonstrate how Christianity and Judaism intersect and inform one another on a variety of scholarly and practical areas of study. Therefore, submissions to *JMJS* are to be supported by a thoughtful, biblical, and theological analysis and relevant to Messianic Jewish thought, Jewish evangelism and the interplay between Judaism and Christianity.

Contributions:

The editors welcome contributions from all who respect the role of the Jewish people in the plan of God and who wish to explore the inter-relatedness between faith in Yeshua the Messiah and Judaism. Submissions are welcomed that are of interest and relevance to the aims and readership of the journal.

Editorial Limitations:

Articles appearing in the journal do not necessarily reflect the views of the editors but are intended to promote a better understanding of the Messianic Jewish movement and the ways in which Evangelical Christianity relates to Jewish history, tradition, biblical scholarship and practice.



Chosen People Ministries

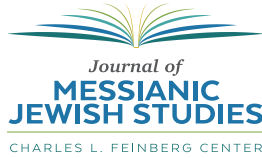
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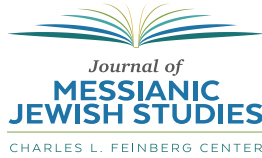
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Calvin L. Smith is Principal and Director of Postgraduate Studies at King's Evangelical Divinity School, United Kingdom, and Editor of *The Evangelical Review of Theology and Politics*. Smith holds a PhD from the University of Birmingham, publishes and speaks widely on both Pentecostalism and Church responses to Israel, and frequently visits the Middle East.

DEREK TIDBALL

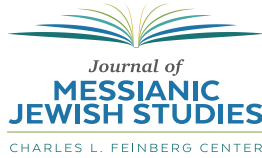
Derek Tidball was formerly principal of London School of Theology. A Baptist minister, he has served in both local churches and national roles, including tutoring for King's Evangelical



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Thy Kingdom Come A Conference on the Bible, Theology and the Future

Mitch Glaser

In November of 2014 Chosen People Ministries (New York) and King's Evangelical Divinity School (United Kingdom) co-hosted a conference in London focusing on eschatology. The general aims of the conference were threefold:

1) To focus academically on an area of theology which, in recent years, has arguably fallen by the wayside among British scholarly Evangelicals, perhaps in large part because this vital area of Christian theology has been sensationalised and become the exclusive domain of popular, fundamentalist Evangelicalism. Many American Evangelicals have also misunderstood the role of Israel in God's plan of redemption as well. The rise of Supersessionism among "next generation" churches and the neo-Reformed movement has also downplayed the importance of delving deeply into this vital area of theology for a variety



of reasons; some reactionary and also due to a hermeneutic that minimizes a more literal approach to prophecy.

2) To offer a scholarly and broadly premillennial treatment of the Bible's teachings of the end times, thus bolstering and encouraging debate among a dwindling minority of UK premillennial scholars, as well as challenging narrow and/or erroneous stereotypes of pre-millennialism among the wider British Evangelical scholarly community.

3) To further discussion regarding the current theological debate regarding the current Middle East crisis, and to explore God's how plan for the future of Israel impacts Jewish evangelism today.

The conference, held at Emmanuel Centre, Westminster, featured speakers from across the Evangelical spectrum, each bringing their own unique contribution to the conversation. Dr Derek Tidball (formerly Principal of London School of Theology and Vice-President of the Evangelical Alliance) spoke from a non-premillennial perspective, highlighting the need for Evangelicals, regardless of their doctrinal position, to engage seriously with the issue of God's plans for the future.

Dr Tidball's contribution is included, though his position is somewhat atypical of the Feinberg Center's position on eschatology as it reflects a more traditional British position on eschatology and is therefore important to read and compare with the other articles.

Dr Calvin Smith spoke as a premillennial non-dispensationalist on the future hope of Israel. Uniquely Messianic Jewish papers were presented by Dr Mitch Glaser (President, Chosen People Ministries, New York) and Daniel Nessim (Director, Chosen People, Seattle), exploring Jewish evangelism and the Old Testament teachings on the Day of the Lord.

Scholarly dispensational and progressive dispensational

contributions were presented by Dr Craig Blaising (Southerwestern Baptist Theological Seminary) and Dr Darrell Bock (Dallas Theological Seminary). Mike Moore's contribution is also deeply appreciated as it reflects the long held view of British theologians who believe in a future for Israel based upon the Apostle Paul's letter to the Romans and in particular chapters 9-11.

We are grateful to Kregel Publications, Grand Rapids, Michigan for allowing us to republish Dr. Blaising's excellent article, which appears in the book, *The People, the Land and the Future of Israel*. All the conference's final publication versions of each paper are also published in the *Evangelical Review of Theology and Politics*. Video recordings of the actual presentations are also available for purchase from Chosen People Ministries.

Please note that certain articles in this journal were previously published in the United Kingdom; therefore, some follow British spelling and grammatical usage, and others US usage.

**“Thy Kingdom Come” ~
Conference Programme:
Westminster, London, October 17-18, 2014**

PAPERS

Friday

19:30 “The Coming Kingdom and the Lord’s Prayer”
Dr Derek Tidball: Matthew 6

Saturday

10:30 “The Coming Kingdom and the Hope of Israel”
Dr Calvin Smith: Romans 11

11:15 “The Coming Kingdom and the Great Commission”
Dr Mitch Glaser: Matthew 28

12:15 LUNCH AND MARKETPLACE

13:15 “The Coming Kingdom and the Words of Jesus”
Dr Darrell Bock

14:15 “The Coming Kingdom and the Day of the Lord”
Mr Daniel Nessim: Joel 2

15:45 PARALLEL SESSIONS

Mike Moore, “The Coming Kingdom: Do we have to be Premillennial?”

Anthony Royle, “The Keys of the Kingdom:
Christian Halakhah for the Realised Eschaton”

Daniel Button, “Creation Care in the Context of Eschatology”

Stefan Bosman, “The ‘Israel of God’ in Light of
Comparative Jewish Texts”

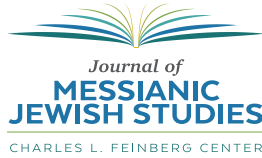
Thomas Fretwell, “Assessing Socio-Political Arguments
in Support of Supersessionism”

PAPERS

17:00 The Coming Kingdom and Biblical Interpretation
Dr Craig Blasing

18:00 Panel Discussion, Q&A

18:45 Conference Ends



Introduction

Gregory Hagg

The *Journal of Messianic Jewish Studies* (JMJS) is a new effort to speak into the world of Jewish ministry and scholarship. It is sponsored by the Charles L. Feinberg Center for Messianic Jewish Studies, a partnership between Chosen People Ministries and the Talbot School of Theology of Biola University. This first issue is centered on the eschatological theme of the Kingdom of God, and, as such, addresses one of the most conspicuous shortcomings of current Christian thought – the decline of cogent, Biblical teaching on prophecy.

As C.S. Lewis famously said,

We are afraid of the jeer about “pie in the sky,” and of being told that we are trying to “escape” from the duty of making a happy world here and now into dreams of a happy world elsewhere. But either there is “pie in the sky” or there is not. If there is not, then Christianity is false, for this doctrine is woven into its whole fabric.”¹

1 C.S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain* (New York: Macmillan, 1962; reprint, New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996), 129-130.



There has been recent reluctance on the part of professors, students, pastors, and, ultimately, those who occupy church pews to seriously study eschatology. (See the article by Dr. Mitch Glaser in this journal as to how this has affected the cause of Jewish evangelism.)

Why should we learn as much Biblical truth as possible about the “pie in the sky?” No doubt Lewis was referring to heaven in general, but it is incumbent upon believers today to search out as much truth as possible, especially as it relates to the coming Kingdom of God. Certainly, the apocalypse was to be read with a view toward the future. “Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near.”² A futurist interpretation of John’s prophecy would suggest that if the time was near in his day, it must be considerably closer today!

These are difficult and trying days. The knowledge of prophecy gives the believer assurance when chaos seems to be taking over the world. God is in control. It also gives the believer a heightened sense of anticipation of the Lord’s return. When current events seem to be aligned with predictions of things to come in the Bible, he looks for the Return. God is coming back.

When the believer is encouraged and excited about the future, he more likely has incentive to share the good news that the Messiah has come and work unceasingly for the Lord. God is saving. Certainly, there is a camaraderie among those of kindred spirit, and while there are differing opinions concerning the Kingdom of God, the believer enjoys fellowship with all those who anticipate the Return of the Messiah. God is uniting His people.

Finally and perhaps most importantly, the believer who studies the prophetic Word is to “deny ungodliness . . . looking

for that blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus.”³ God is sanctifying His people.

*Knowledge of prophecy
gives the believer holiness in everyday life.*

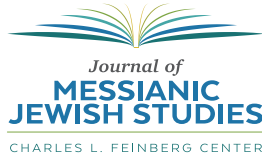


Articles

The Journal of Messianic Jewish Studies



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The Great Commission and the Coming Kingdom: Matthew 28:18-20

Mitch Glaser

KEYWORDS:

Jewish Evangelism	Missions	Gospel
Kingdom	The Great Commission	Matthew
Jewish Backgrounds	Eschatology	

ABSTRACT

This paper argues that God has a plan and purpose for the conclusion of our present age. This future will not be ethereal or nondescript as Scripture outlines coming prophetic events with great detail and specificity. Dr. Glaser, in a thorough exposition of Matthew 28:18-20, concludes that Jesus linked the proclamation of the Gospel with His second coming by commanding His disciples to make disciples throughout world “*until the end of the age.*”

Therefore, Jesus and the disciples were very concerned about the world to come and Dr. Glaser suggests that the future hope of a literal Messianic kingdom is woven into the very core of both Testaments but is presently minimized by a rising eschatological cynicism within today’s church.

Dr. Glaser develops the task given to the disciples known as the Great Commission through a careful exegesis of the text and discussion



of the first century Jewish understanding of what it meant to “make disciples.” Further, Glaser demonstrates that the term *συντελείας* used in Matthew 24:3 and 28:20 in and translated as “end” would best be viewed as the consummation of a series of eschatological events surrounding the Second Coming of Jesus. Glaser dismisses the notion that the “end of the age,” as the phrase is so often translated, should be understood by today’s disciples as simple words of comfort or a conclusion to what has gone before, but rather to an unfolding of “end times” events inclusive of the restoration of Israel, various eschatological judgments and the penultimate return of Christ.

Dr. Glaser argues that Jesus encouraged the disciples to look towards the events of the *συντελείας*, the consummation of the age, thereby creating a greater sense of urgency and providing the motivation for fulfilling the Commission. He further suggests that when the events of the future are de-literalized and downplayed that the burden for bringing the Gospel to those without Jesus is diminished

INTRODUCTION

It can be quite frightening to think about the future – especially if you read the Bible and take it literally! The more romanticized happy ending we all love in literature, theatre and the movies is simply not part of the divine script for human history. The future will be unyielding and selective as it holds good news for some and bad news for others. How harshly this falls on our 21st century ears. Yet, it is true!

Jesus calls us to be engaged, but not overly attached to our very temporary existence on earth. Believers, like everyone else, tend to embrace the world’s dream of a better life – to live longer, to enjoy a “no worries” mentality, to live for the moment, to change what we can on earth and to not become overly concerned with the future. We sometimes behave as if God has given the future to man to control and shape as we see fit.

We know that our Messiah wants us to join Him in being crucified daily, forsaking the things of this passing planet to follow Him in obedience to all He has taught. But, it is hard to let go of this world, as this existence is all we know! Admittedly, we have a difficult time trusting the Lord today, nevertheless tomorrow. Yet, the future God planned for us before the foundations of the earth is inevitable and coming soon.

Humanity is not meandering through the ages, as God has a plan and purpose for the conclusion of our present age. This future will not be ethereal or nondescript and is outlined with great detail and specificity in Scripture. It will include a full itinerary of events that cannot be avoided. Rather than remaining passive participants in the future God has prepared for humanity, we should study the Scriptures and discover what He has planned so that we may take an active role in the plan.

As one of our best-known modern-day Jewish “prophets,” Bob Dylan, wrote,

... Like a thief in the night, he'll replace
wrong with right
When He returns.

... Will I ever learn that there'll be no
peace that the war won't cease?
Until He returns.

... Of every earthly plan that be known to
man, He is unconcerned
He's got plans of His own to set up
His throne
When He returns.¹

The future God has planned for the world is unstoppable!

1 <http://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/bobdylan/whenhereturns.html> from “Slow Train Coming,” Lyrics and Music by Bob Dylan.



Today, many thoughtful Evangelicals gravitate towards a more undefined view of the future, spiritualizing the kingdom message of the Old Testament prophets. We tend to take the Bible's teaching about the future less literally than in previous years. We say, "Thy kingdom come," but have only a minimal understanding of the kingdom we expect.

In fact, eschatological or "end times" agnosticism is more common today than digging deeply into Scripture to find out what God has in store for those who love Him and His Word. Perhaps we have overemphasized the coming kingdom in the past? The current emphasis within the Church over the last few decades encouraging believers to do what is possible to alleviate present suffering and injustice is positive; however, this focus on the present tends to obfuscate the teaching of Scripture about our future hope. We behave as if nurturing a future hope is less godly and oppositional to working towards a better present.

Unfortunately, the Church has become imbalanced, not realizing that our sure hope for the future is what Scripture provides to strengthen our efforts to transform the ungodly structures of a fallen world and comfort those suffering in its wake. We often quote the Sermon on the Mount to undergird our concern for the present when Jesus says,

So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own. (Matthew 6:34)

However, using this text to minimize or lessen the significance of God's plan for the future in Scripture is a misunderstanding of the text. Jesus never avoided the future! In Matthew 6, the Lord is simply telling us to trust God with our tomorrows and to believe that He will provide for our needs as we "seek first His kingdom." The Lord is not telling us to ignore the future. In fact, He says the opposite in Matthew 24:32-33,

Now learn the parable from the fig tree: when its branch has already become tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near; so, you too, when you see all these things, recognize that He is near, right at the door.

Knowing more about our biblical future and the coming kingdom is one of our duties as disciples of Jesus the Messiah. We are not only part of God’s today, but we also have starring roles in His forever story! We must discover what He has planned to the best of our ability and allow the future to inform the way we live and serve in the present.

This is precisely why He addressed the future as part of what we term the Great Commission. What we do today in obedience to Jesus only makes sense in light of the future that awaits us. The Savior calls His disciples to live today in light of tomorrow.

We recognize that our days are numbered and understand that life, as we know it, will soon end. We also believe that we have little time left to let the world know what Jesus has taught us about salvation, the abundant life and His plan for the future.

Jesus teaches His disciples that the “end of the age” is as certain as His death and resurrection. Should we then concern ourselves with the details? Of course! As His disciples we should not trivialize what mattered so profoundly to our Savior. If so, we demonstrate that we have not learned, followed and observed what He taught, thereby denying the very *teaching* He called us to pass along.

If we are not telling people about the end of the age then we are not doing what Jesus instructed us to do. Perhaps we do not want to embarrass God or be viewed as fanatics on a soapbox in Hyde Park or as Americans would imagine, standing in the middle of a busy urban center with a sandwich board sign hanging on our bodies announcing that the end is near. Yet, it is this recognition of our temporal nature and of our few remaining days on earth



that compels us to reflect upon the *Great Commission in Light of the Coming Kingdom*. I have come to believe that it is impossible to fulfill the Savior's directions to "Go" in Matthew 28:19-20 without powerful motivation. It is this hope of His coming and His reminder of what He has planned for us that will motivate His disciples to carry out this holy Commission. The day is coming when we will run out of time to fulfill the *Commission* He has given us and it is for this reason that Jesus links the Great Commission to the future He planned before the foundations of the earth.

I hope to explore this link between the Great Commission and the coming Kingdom. In doing so, I have chosen to quote liberally from a series of messages given by the great expositor and Christian leader, John Stott, who thought deeply about the Great Commission. He is considered the father of the Lausanne Consultation on World Evangelism and as a local pastor had a great heart for world missions. This series of messages were given at the Berlin Consultation on World Evangelism in 1966. However, his words are as gripping today as they were nearly half-century ago.

I had the joy of spending time with John Stott at the Lausanne Younger Leaders Conference, held in Singapore in 1987, and was impressed by his humility, grasp of the word and his evident love for the Lord and for the Jewish people. It is with deep appreciation for his teaching and ministry that I refer to his comments in Berlin.

COMMON UNDERSTANDINGS OF THE GREAT COMMISSION

The text in its purest form is found in Matthew 28:18-20, where the Savior issues His last set of standing orders to His disciples prior to the ascension,

And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

Speaking to the Berlin Congress on World Evangelism in 1966, John Stott wrote,

The so-called “Great Commission” or “Universal Commission” occurs five times in our Bibles, at the end of each of the four Gospels and once at the beginning of the Acts. There is no need to suppose that these are five versions of a single occasion. It is much more probable that, during the forty days which elapsed between the Resurrection and the Ascension, the risen Lord repeated the same commission many times, although in different words and with different emphases.²

The Commission is found in various texts in the New Testament³, but we will focus on the statement found in Matthew 28:18-20. Stott affirms,

For, in the last resort, we engage in evangelism today, not because we want to or because we choose to or because

2 John Stott, Address to World Conference on Evangelism, Berlin 1966, Part 1 <http://www2.wheaton.edu/bgc/archives/docs/Berlin66/stott1.htm>. Accessed August 2014.

3 Matthew 28:16-20, Mark 16:15-18, Luke 24:44-49, John 20:19-23, and Acts 1:6-8.



we like to, but because we have been told to. The Church is under orders. The risen Lord has commanded us to “go,” to “preach,” “to make disciples,” and that is enough for us. *Evangelistic inactivity is disobedience*. It is, therefore, right for us to go back to the very beginning and re-examine our marching orders.⁴

Allow me then to summarize the various views Christians hold regarding what we usually entitle the *Great Commission* – our marching orders!

Marv Newell, Senior Vice President with *Missio Nexus*, a fellowship of Mission agencies, reduces the various statements of the Great Commission into four helpful points in his book, *Commissioned*:

In the Great Commission Jesus calls for: a worthy messenger, a certain message, a clear strategy, an ultimate goal – world evangelization.⁵

John Stott views the Great Commission as the carrying out of Jesus’ command to go and do three things: make disciples, baptize and teach.

Christ used three verbs: “make disciples,” “baptize,” and “teach.” Some scholars interpret this as a single command to “go and make disciples”; “baptizing them” and “teaching them” [when] they consider the explanation of how disciples are made. I prefer to take the three verbs separately as descriptions of three distinct parts or stages of the one Great Commission of Christ to “go.”⁶

One can already see from a cursory reading of these comments that there is considerable agreement on what the Great

4 Stott, Berlin Conference.

5 Marvin J. Newell, *Commissioned: What Jesus Wants You to Know as You Go*, ChurchSmart Resources, 2010, 182 pp. in the book review by David Mays, <http://www.davidmays.org/BN/NewComm.html>, accessed August 2014.

6 Stott, Berlin Conference.

Commission is all about. The instructions are fairly clear. Jesus, after His resurrection and just prior to His ascension, calls upon the eleven to “go” out from their usual surroundings reaching the world with the message of the Gospel. The strategy and call to action is to carry out three or four tasks, depending on how you divide them: *to make disciples, to baptize these disciples and then to teach them everything the Savior taught us and to help the new disciples to be obedient to what they have learned.*

Chris Wright, British missiologist, Old Testament theologian and International Ministries Director of the Langham Partnership, comments extensively on the nature of the Great Commission in his excellent article, *Integral Mission and the Great Commission “The Five Marks of Mission”*.

Wright both simplifies and yet expands the scope of the Commission. He takes the *Five Marks of Mission*, adopted by the Lambeth Conference of Bishops in 1988⁷, and reduces them to three. The five marks are:

1. To proclaim the good news of the Kingdom; 2. To teach, baptize and nurture new believers; 3. To respond to human need by loving service; 4. To seek to transform unjust structures of society; 5. To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and to sustain the life of the earth.⁸

Wright comments,

However, I prefer to keep things simpler and we can do that by grouping four of the five into two pairs, putting evangelism and teaching together, and putting compassion and justice together. That then creates three major missional tasks, or three focal points for our missional engagement: church, society and creation. Our mission, then, includes:

7 <http://www.loimission.net/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Chris-Wright-IntegralMissionandtheGreatCommission.pdf>, p.3

8 Wright, pp. 3-4.



1. Building the church (through evangelism and teaching), bringing people to repentance, faith and obedience as disciples of Jesus Christ.

2. Serving society (through compassion and justice), in response to Jesus sending us ‘into the world’, to love and serve, to be salt and light, to do good, and to ‘seek the welfare’ of the people around us (as Jeremiah told the Israelites in Babylon, Jer. 29:7).

3. Caring for creation (through godly use of the resources of creation along with ecological concern and action), fulfilling the very first ‘great commission’ given to humanity in Genesis 1 and 2.⁹

Wright argues that the basis for his inclusion of serving society and caring for creation in the mission of the church is based upon the words of Jesus in Matthew 28:20 where He states, *teaching them to observe all that I commanded you* and therefore his points 2 and 3 flow from the expanse of Jesus’ teaching in the Scripture and are not explicitly stated in our text.

I believe adding these more expansive elements as summarized by Wright¹⁰ or any attempt to merge the various emphases of our Messiah’s teaching into the Great Commission is unnecessary as the *commission* focuses on what the disciples are to do and not on the specifics of the curriculum which are expansive, **πάντα ὅσα ἐνετειλάμην ὑμῖν**.

I am concerned about delineating priorities from Jesus’ teaching and including these as part of the Great Commission. This effort moves us beyond the text and may be viewed as imposing the *mood of our day* upon the words of the Savior,

⁹ Wright, p. 5.

¹⁰ Wright’s influence has profoundly influenced the global church through his role as the Chairman of the Theological Commission of the Lausanne movement.

though the priorities Wright chooses are certainly important. I prefer a broader interpretation of the Great Commission in defining the mission of the church. In the text, Jesus did not summarize or prioritize what the disciples were to know and obey; and so Wright’s selections appear to be arbitrary and reveal his priorities more than those of the Savior – as critical as Wright’s priorities are for the church today.

I believe this is why Jesus kept the commission broad. He may have been concerned that we would promote some of His commands and minimize others.

THE CONTEXT OF THE PASSAGE

It is important to remember that the Great Commission was given on the mountain (Matthew 28:16) after the resurrection, perhaps immediately preceding the ascension as was the case with Luke 24:45-49 and Acts 1:6-11. Additionally, we note that the commission was given to the “11” and not, at least in this case, to the broader group of disciples.

As was the case in Acts 1:8, the commission to go out was linked to Jesus’ death, resurrection and to His second coming. Clearly, the commission was the job description given to the disciples to pursue until Jesus returned. The commission revealed the work of the disciples in the interim period between His first and second comings.

This promise to return was clearly viewed as being more immediate by the 11 than by today’s disciples who have been waiting for two thousand years! Therefore, the words of Jesus fell upon eager ears tagged with an urgency we have lost today. The disciples were given a task needing to be completed in what was probably understood as a very short amount of time. Weeks, months, and years – we cannot be certain, but evidently the disciples believed they would see Jesus again very soon.



AN ANALYSIS OF THE TEXT

We notice that the Savior's authority and the command to go, make disciples, baptize, teach, etc., are linked together by literary style and grammar.¹¹ I would agree with Stott and other commentators that Jesus joined these critical elements into a cohesive strategy formulated in the Great Commission. We will therefore briefly examine each aspect of the commission.

Once again, it is helpful to read the passage as we begin now to explore the details of the commission.

And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."¹²

HIS MESSIANIC AUTHORITY

Jesus proclaims,

All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.
(ἐδόθη μοι πᾶσα ἐξουσία ἐν οὐρανῷ καὶ ἐπὶ [τῆς] γῆς)

The Great Commission flows from the divine authority granted to Jesus, expressed in this prolegomena to the Commission.

11 Matthew may intend Jesus' words to be understood as arranged in a chiasm around the baptism statement in v. 19b. Balanced around this will be the discipling (v. 19a) and teaching statements (v. 20a), and around these in turn the statements about authority (v. 18b) and presence (v. 20b). Nolland, J. (2005). *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text*. Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press. p.1264.

12 καὶ προσελθὼν ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἐλάλησεν αὐτοῖς λέγων ἐδόθη μοι πᾶσα ἐξουσία ἐν οὐρανῷ καὶ ἐπὶ [τῆς] γῆς. πορευθέντες οὖν μαθητεύσατε πάντα τὰ ἔθνη, βαπτίζοντες αὐτοὺς εἰς τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ καὶ τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος, διδάσκοντες αὐτοὺς τηρεῖν πάντα ὅσα ἐνετειλάμην ὑμῖν · καὶ ἰδοὺ ἐγὼ μεθ' ὑμῶν εἰμι πάσας τὰς ἡμέρας ἕως τῆς συντελείας τοῦ αἰῶνος.

What then is the link between the authority of Jesus held prior to this moment and this new moment that causes Jesus to begin the statement of the Commission by mentioning that “all authority” is being given to Him? Was there a change that should be noted and one that impacts His commissioning of the disciples?

I believe that there was a profound change and that new and greater authority was given to Jesus and thereby passed along to the disciples! First of all, the work of redemption is now complete as He died as a ransom for sin. Secondly, He resurrected from the grave, conquering sin and death showing that even though the Jewish people rejected him as the promised Messianic King, He did fulfill an additional array of prophecies, specifically Isaiah 53.

Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory? Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures. (Luke 24:26-27)

Therefore, His kingly authority is not based upon His accession to the Davidic throne or upon Israel’s acceptance of His right to rule. Jesus is Israel’s king and Savior of the world according to the will of His Father and obedience as the divine Son, vindicated by the resurrection of the dead, as Paul describes in Romans 1:2-6, as Jesus *was declared the Son of God by the resurrection from the dead*.

Finally, because the risen Messiah was given all authority, which now includes πάντα τὰ ἔθνη, *all nations*, as the intended audience for the message borne by the disciples now significantly changes. This good news would no longer be limited to Israel but proclaimed to the nations of the world. This is a change in instructions from the Gospels (Matthew 10:5) and affirms Jesus’ fulfillment of the prophecy in Daniel chapter 7 of the divine Son of Man.



I kept looking in the night visions, And behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming, And He came up to the Ancient of Days And was presented before Him. And to Him was given dominion, Glory and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations and men of every language might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which will not pass away; and His kingdom is one, which will not be destroyed. (Daniel 7:13-14)

John Nolland in his commentary on the Book of Matthew adds,

It seems, then, that Mt. 28:18 is most likely to represent a reaffirmation of authority after the rejection of Jesus by the Jerusalem authorities which led to his death. Through resurrection God has vindicated Jesus, who is now able to freshly affirm his authority.¹³

Therefore, in light of His rejection, death, resurrection and ascension, Daniel 7 can now be better understood as falling into the “body of prophecies” speaking of His second coming, the establishment of the kingdom on earth and fulfillment of the many other *second coming* prophecies, especially Isaiah 9:7 where the prophet writes,

There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, On the throne of David and over his kingdom, To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness From then on and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will accomplish this.

Jesus was raised from rejection as the Messianic and Davidic King and granted authority over Israel and the nations, alluding to His fulfilling the Abrahamic covenant. However, this does not diminish the hope of a literal Davidic kingdom, it only postpones it as even in this final reminder to His disciples of His Messianic

13 Nolland John. (2005). Preface. *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press), 1265.

authority, the imminence of His return to reign as King is implicitly stated. He would still establish the literal throne of David on earth upon His return, with all of the concomitant blessings for the nations (Genesis 12:3).

He did not lose authority because of Israel’s rejection, rather His authority was expanded on the basis of His “finished work” on the cross and resurrection from the dead. His authority extends beyond Israel to the nations as He came as the King of Israel, but died, rose and ascended as Lord of all nations. In effect, His passion rather than His conquests in the traditional sense led to His receiving “all authority” and the passing along of this authority over both Israel and the Gentiles to His disciples. His death did not make Him less of a king as, in fact, it made Him a greater King with a broader empire.

The authority the disciples now receive is linked to the power of the Holy Spirit to accomplish the task (Luke 24: 48-49, Acts 1:8) and to His present and future rule as the Messianic Davidic King over Israel and the nations.

As John Stott so eloquently concludes nearly half-century ago,

The fundamental basis of all Christian missionary enterprise is the universal authority of Jesus Christ, “in heaven and on earth.” If the authority of Jesus were circumscribed on earth, if He were but one of many religious teachers, one of many Jewish prophets, one of many divine incarnations, we would have no mandate to present Him to the nations as the Lord and Saviour of the world. If the authority of Jesus were limited in heaven, if He had not decisively overthrown the principalities and powers, we might still proclaim Him to the nations, but we would never be able to “turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God” (Acts 26:18). Only because all authority on earth belongs to Christ are we go to all nations. And only because all authority in heaven as well is His have we any hope of success. It must have seemed ridiculous to send that tiny nucleus of Palestinian peasants



to win the world for Christ. For Christ's Church today, so hopelessly outnumbered by hundreds of millions who neither know nor acknowledge Him, the task is equally gigantic. It is the unique, the universal authority of Jesus Christ which gives us both the right and the confidence to seek to make disciples of all the nations. Before His authority on earth the nations must bow; before His authority in heaven no demon can stop them.¹⁴

THE COMMAND TO GO

The first part of the Commission is an appeal to the disciples by Jesus "to go"!

Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations.
(πορευθέντες οὖν μαθητεύσατε πάντα τὰ ἔθνη.)

There have been endless discussions as to whether or not the "Go" should be translated as an imperative. Most English translations simply use the word "go" and do not try to "squeeze" more from the Greek.¹⁵ Though the participle is not an imperative, it can take on the quality of command as the following verb, μαθητεύσατε, which is dominant in the sentence, is an imperative.¹⁶ It is understandable why so many think the "go" is a command, but this is only true by way of implication and attachment to the participle to make disciples.

14 John Stott, Berlin Conference, Part 2, <http://www2.wheaton.edu/bgc/archives/docs/Berlin66/stott2.htm>, Accessed August 2014.

15 If the correct sense of the aorist participle in Matthew 28:19 is "as you go," one wonders why no translation brings this out? Every translation consulted translates the participle as a definite command "go." These translations include KJV, NKJV, ASV, RSV, NASB, NIV, TNIV, ESV, TEV, CEV, JB Phillips, The Living Bible, Amplified New Testament, The Jerusalem Bible, NAB (i.e., The Catholic Bible). It is possible that some of these translations translated the participle as a command by accident, or ignorance. However, it is unlikely that the major translations listed above were ignorant of the Greek grammar when translating into the English. (<http://www.faithandreasonforum.com/index.asp?PageID=16&ArticleID=536>, accessed August 20, 2014)

16 <https://www.teknaia.com/greek-dictionary/mathetuo>.

The verb, πορευθέντες “to go” is an aorist passive participle plural and this form of the verb has caused many debates and impacted the mission strategy of many. The participle could have the sense of “after having gone,” “once you have left,” or “even while you are on the way,” etc. There is a presumption that the disciples would be on their way to bring the message of Jesus to the world.

Therefore the call to action would emphasize what the disciples should do as they go and not emphasize the call to “go” as if it is a decision to be made. This is also not completely clear from the text, but seems to be a strong possibility and, at the least, the translation “having gone” would certainly be acceptable to most scholars¹⁷.

So, there is an assumption on Jesus’ part that the disciples would be on their way, and the commission defines what they should do as they go. In other words, they would be leaving their homes in pursuit of the mission of “making disciples of all the nations.” This makes sense as one could hardly disciple the nations by staying in one geographic area!

Craig Blomberg brings a healthy balance to these discussions regarding πορευθέντες as he suggests caution in using Jesus’ call to the disciples to “go” as somehow elevating foreign missions over serving the Lord wherever the Lord has placed you. He writes,

Too much is made of it when the disciples’ “going” is overly subordinated, so that Jesus’ charge is to proselytize merely where one is. Matthew frequently uses “go” as an introductory circumstantial participle that is rightly translated as coordinate to the main verb—here “Go and make” (cf. 2:8; 9:13; 11:4; 17:27; 28:7). Too little is made of it when all attention is centered on the command to “go,” as in countless appeals for missionary candidates, so that foreign missions

17 <http://www.teknia.com/greekexercise/12-8-t>.



are elevated to a higher status of Christian service than other forms of spiritual activity. To “make disciples of all nations” does require many people to leave their homelands, but Jesus’ main focus remains on the task of all believers to duplicate themselves wherever they may be.¹⁸

I agree that these two potential avenues for fulfilling the Great Commission should be kept in balance: moving cross culturally – which can also mean “staying where you are,” especially today where we have the opportunity to serve so many different people groups in major urban areas; or, on the other hand, *going* in the traditional foreign missions sense – a ministry that is still needed, especially for those who are humble and able to serve nationals leading movements within their own culture, country and language groups.

Either way, Jesus is explicitly clear in commanding His disciples to disciple others whether they go to a new place, invest their lives in a local foreign culture or remain where they are. Disciples are responsible to disciple others without restriction of culture, ethnicity, geography or language.

THE INCLUSION OF THE GENTILES

It is worth further exploring the expansion of the commission to non-Jews in some greater depth. As mentioned, Jesus calls the disciples to go beyond the physical seed of Abraham and to make disciples among the Gentiles. As Yeshua said, make disciples of all the nations (πάντα τὰ ἔθνη).¹⁹

18 Craig Blomberg, *Matthew*, vol. 22 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 431

19 Though it often emphasized the judgment that would fall on the Gentile oppressors of God’s people, OT eschatology also had a very positive place for Gentiles in God’s ultimate purposes. See e.g., Ps. 87; 96; Is. 2:2–4; 42:1, 6; 49:6; 66:19–20; Mic. 4:2–3; Zc. 8:20–23. Nolland, p.1266 footnote.

Prior to this post-resurrection command to include the nations, the disciples were told to limit their ministries to the Jewish people. Matthew writes,

These twelve Jesus sent out after instructing them: “Do not go in the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter any city of the Samaritans; but rather go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as you go, preach, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand.’ (Matthew 10:5-7)

Later on Matthew records the healing of a Gentile girl by Jesus (Matthew 15:24-26), but describes this miracle as an exception to His mission among the Jewish people.

But He answered and said, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” But she came and began to bow down before Him, saying, “Lord, help me!” And He answered and said, “It is not good to take the children’s bread and throw it to the dogs.

Julius Scott, former New Testament professor at Wheaton College, suggests that the restriction to the Jewish people was not because of any first century ethnocentrism but rather because Jesus respected the plan of God outlined in the Old Testament that described different stages in the unfolding of God’s plan for the world and varying roles for both Jews and Gentiles. He indicates that the inclusion of the Gentiles in Matthew is part of the more general eschatological emphasis of Matthew. This redirection to preach to the Gentiles in Matthew 28:19-20 is another additional signal of the importance of the *age to come* with the preaching of the Gospel in our present age. It is impossible to separate what we have been called to do with what God has planned for the future.

Scott writes,

The answer to the question is to be found in a proper understanding of the way God works at various stages



of salvation history. God's offer of salvation to accept the unworthy, His promise that "I will be your God and you shall be my people," is to all, but it is to be mediated through his chosen people. Jesus words and deeds in Matthew 10 and Matthew 15 show His awareness of the need to make the offer of salvation first to Israel to call it into being the renewed people of God who will then communicate that message to others. It was a procedure that had been firmly fixed in the Old Testament and understood by at least some of Jesus' contemporaries. These words and deeds demonstrate a keen sense of Jesus part of what was appropriate in this stage of salvation history in which He lived. His healing and ministry to the Gentile demoniacs, the Centurion's servant, a Samaritan woman and leper, and other non-Jews is the first fruits of a larger ingathering that shows His compassion for individuals was not restricted.²⁰

We should read the Gospel of Matthew and the life of Jesus as a story, with an introduction, beginning and end along with plot twists throughout the narrative. The shift, which took place in Matthew chapter 12 at His rejection by Israel's leaders, initiates His minimizing further discussion of establishing a physical kingdom. The evident agenda for His first coming now focuses on rejection, death, resurrection; and the literal kingdom He came to establish in Israel is moved to the future, subsequent to this predicted passion

Note the change in chapter 16:20-21 where Matthew records, Then He warned the disciples that they should tell no one that He was the Christ. From that time Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day.

Jesus presented the Good News to His own people but was

20 J. Julius Scott Jr., "Gentiles and the Ministry of Jesus: Further Observations on Matthew 10:5-6, 15:21-28" in *The Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 33/2 (June 1990), 161-169.

rejected by the leadership. Within the context and story line of the Gospel of Matthew, we see Jesus respond and by setting His mind on the cross (Isaiah 53 etc.) leaving the fulfillment of the many remaining kingdom promises pertaining to Israel for His return. These kingdom promises were given to the Jewish people and the Gentiles as the prophets wrote extensively about the role of the nations in the eschatological Kingdom of God (Amos 9:15).

However, there is an implied delay in the fulfillment of these promises made explicit by Jesus in the Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24-25, Mark 13, Luke 21). It was not as if Jesus would die and rise and the earthly Kingdom would immediately appear. There are many hints, warning His disciples of a delay, though again, the length of the delay would certainly have been deemed shorter in the minds of the disciples than we understand 2,000 years later.

There are two statements Jesus made during the Olivet discourse, one recorded in Luke 21 and the other in Matthew 24 that are critical to our understanding of a shift marking the inclusion the Gentiles as part of the Commission and the future, literal kingdom. In Luke 21:24, Jesus says,

and they will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

Jesus informs His disciples of a change of seasons coming whereby the Gentiles will be included in God’s present focus and for a time will be dominant in the same way Israel was dominant in the previous age. Yet, this time would be temporary, as the promises God made to the Jewish people that they will again become a nation, with their own land ruled by an enthroned Savior, would still come to pass.



Further in Matthew 24:14, Jesus says,

This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come.²¹

The shift is obvious. Israel's rejection of Jesus as King and Messiah caused a "predicted" change in His ministry that led to an intensified focus on His death for sin, the description of the expected literal kingdom as future and the inclusion of the Gentiles in God's greater plan.

However, *Gentile inclusion would not precipitate Israel's exclusion*²² or "replace" the Jewish people with the Gentiles since, in his earliest promises to Abram, both Jews and Gentiles were included in His redemptive purposes. His death, resurrection and ascension to His Father's right hand would continue until a sovereignly selected moment when He returns to establish His literal Davidic kingdom and throne amidst a repentant Israel and obedient community of Gentiles.

Peter describes this phasing in of the Kingdom in this way,

Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord; and that He may send Jesus, the Christ appointed for you, whom heaven must receive until the period of restoration of all things about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time. (Acts 3:19-21)

If this promise of Peter is taken literally, there is no question that His return to establish this kingdom is viewed by the earliest Apostles as a certain hope and would be precipitated by the

21 In this instance Jesus describes the end by using the term καὶ τότε ἔξει τὸ τέλος.

22 I am grateful to my often co-editor, Dr. Darrell Bock, for this wonderful turn of phrase.

turning of the Jewish people to Jesus. We do not know when He is coming but we do understand from Peter’s appeal the basis upon which He would return. This turning of the Jewish people to Jesus would precipitate the return of Christ.

We should not be surprised that Jesus calls upon His disciples, a remnant representing a renewed Israel (Romans 11:5) and precursor to the faithful Israel of the future (Romans 11:11-15), to do what God had called the Jewish people to do in the past – to bring His blessings to the nations. The inclusion of Gentiles into the Kingdom would therefore not start when Jesus returns but would begin immediately and lead to the day when both Jews and Gentiles become joyful citizens of the Kingdom of God. This is foreshadowed in today’s Church and expanded at the return of the Lord.

The presence of the Church made up of redeemed Jews and Gentiles should not detract from the eschatological establishment of a literal kingdom, as God’s plan for the planet would be fulfilled incrementally. The *eleven* are called to disciple the nations, initiating, in part, the culmination of His promises to both Jews and Gentiles, built upon the bedrock of the Abrahamic Covenant (Genesis 12:1-3), with Jesus as the chief cornerstone! The disciples are called to preach to all in light of His soon coming and the Great Commission is simply one additional step towards the future God has planned for mankind.

Finally, we must understand that the shift within the Gospel of Matthew from a focus on Jewish people to non-Jews, does not imply that the Jewish people are excluded from the *panta ta ethnē*.

Blomberg concludes,

“All nations” translates *panta ta ethnē*. The two main options for interpreting *ethnē* are Gentiles (non-Jews) and



peoples (somewhat equivalent to ethnic groups). The former translation is popular among those who see either Jesus or Matthew as believing that God once-for-all rejected the Jews. We have repeatedly seen evidence that calls this perspective into serious question (see under 10:23; 23:39; 24:30; 27:25). Matthew's most recent uses of *ethnē* (24:9, 14; 25:32) seem to include Jews and Gentiles alike as the recipients of evangelism and judgment.

God is not turning his back on Jewish people here. What has changed is that they can no longer be saved simply by trusting in God under the Mosaic covenant. All who wish to be in fellowship with God must now come to him through Jesus.²³

Blomberg interprets the words of Jesus accurately as the Messiah had come and fulfilled the promises of the prophets for both Jews and Gentiles. There would be no other name by which men could be saved (Acts 4:12) and no other way to the Father but through the Jewish Messiah. (John 14:6). It is His death and resurrection that provides salvation today and provides the basis for His second coming and right to rule as the once-and-forever Son of David (Isaiah 9:6-7). Yet, the inclusion of all nations in His plan of redemption does not negate the literal nature of the promises related to the establishment of a literal kingdom in Jerusalem that provides even greater peace and blessing for both Jewish and Gentiles²⁴.

THE ABRAHAMIC COVENANT

In many ways the Great Commission may be viewed as, in part, fulfilling the Abrahamic Covenant. In this foundational passage God outlined His plan for His chosen people and marked four

23 Craig Blomberg, *Matthew*, vol. 22 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 431-432.

24 Romans 11:11-15.

major legs upon which the promise stands. By calling Abram to be His “Semite” (see Genesis 9:26, 11:10-32, 12:1-3) and vehicle of promise for a fallen world, God promised the Patriarch that he would be given a people, a land, a relationship with the Creator and a mission – to bless the world. There would be consequences for those nations that did not bless the descendants of Abraham, as God would not bless them (Genesis 12:3)²⁵

God chose the Abrahamic family to be His conduit of blessings to a broken world. The Lord always had the nations in mind even when He selected Abram and narrowed His choice. This role for Israel among the nations was reiterated through the Hebrew Scriptures, especially in the Book of Isaiah (Isaiah 41:8-9, 43:10, 44:8). Israel was chosen was to show the nations the glory of the one true God and to capture His inerrant words through Moses, the Psalmists, prophets and ultimately the writers of the New Testament (who were primarily Jewish). Israel failed in her efforts to bring the light to the nations so God the Father, through His Son, fulfilled the task and now disciples of the Son from among the remnant of Israel and the Gentiles are charged with completing this task by the time Jesus returns and again as Luke writes,

and they will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until *the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled*. (Luke 21:24)

In light of the Abrahamic Covenant, it is easy to view the Great Commission as an eschatological commission, a mission with the future in mind, and a sign of the soon-coming consummation

²⁵ Moses uses two Hebrew words for curse. The first, from קָלַל, referring to making light of the role the Jewish people would play in God’s plan and the second, from אָרַר, used throughout Dt. 28 and Lev. 26, refers to the temporal curses that would be meted out upon Israel for disobedience. Therefore, if a nation made light of the Jewish people they would receive the curses for disobedience that were promised to fall upon Israel as well.



of the ages. The inclusion of the Gentiles was part of God's plan for all eternity and begins incrementally with the birth of the Church, continuing towards full fruition when the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

These new disciples from among the "other sheep" (John 10:16) would not replace the Jewish people but rather support the Jewish disciples in their global evangelistic mission. Is it any wonder the Lord called a learned Jewish disciple Paul (Saul of Tarsus) to be the father of the Gentile mission. And when the task is completed, the Lord will return to reign as the Prince of Peace and eternal Davidic King (Isaiah 9:6-7, Romans 11:11-29), bringing blessing to all.

The Gentiles would have a major role in the events of the consummation of history as God's vehicle in turning the Jewish people back to Himself through His Son. As Paul writes,

I say then, they did not stumble so as to fall, did they? May it never be! But by their transgression salvation has come to the Gentiles, to make them jealous. (Romans 11:11)

And this future conversion of the Jewish people would serve as the lynch pin for the second coming and the events of the consummation. The Gentiles therefore have a key role in bringing about the consummation when the Abrahamic blessings will be fully enjoyed. These expected eschatological blessings were not viewed as ethereal and should not be allegorized as this hope for the nations included physical promises of restoration and blessing to Israel and the Gentile nations as well.

THE WORK OF THOSE WHO GO

Jesus gives His disciples three main tasks to accomplish as they go. These cannot be fully understood without knowing more

about the first-century Jewish history and culture. Matthew had no model for the relationship between a disciple and the Messiah other than that of a Rabbi to his disciples. Knowing more about this relationship helps unlock the meaning of the text by providing us with the historical context to understand Jesus’ and Matthew’s emphasis on reproducing disciples, baptism and teaching for the purpose of obedience. The focus of the Commission is to make disciples and therefore, it is critical to try and understand what the Savior meant in using the term “disciple,” μαθητής.

Make Disciples

Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations
(πορευθέντες οὖν μαθητεύσατε πάντα τὰ ἔθνη)

There has been quite a bit of scholarly and even popular discussion these days about the Jewish roots of the faith. Understanding first century Jewish life is today understood as providing a valuable key to the interpretation of the New Testament. The role of the first century Jewish Rabbi and his relationship to his disciples provides the context for understanding the “goal” of the Great Commission: disciples reproducing disciples.

It was not unusual for a Rabbi, like Jesus, to have disciples. The word “disciples” (*talmidim*) is from a Hebrew word which means *to learn*. The disciples were learners. The way a disciple learned from their Rabbi has been described in Jewish literature, though most of what we have written is from the Mishnaic period²⁶ and beyond, but still reflects an earlier understanding of the Rabbi/Disciple relationship. In effect, the disciples of a first century Rabbi were apprentices who lived, ate, travelled, worked and “sat at the feet” of their Rabbi.

²⁶ 200-500 AD.



In her popular volume, *Sitting at the Feet of Jesus*, Ann Spangler describes the Rabbi/Disciple relationship for today's Christians.²⁷ Members of the Jerusalem School of Synoptic Studies, including Brad Young who teaches at Oral Roberts University, have helped us grapple with these Jewish backgrounds as reflected in the early Jesus movement. Additional Jewish background materials can be found in Alfred Edersheim's volumes²⁸ and many additional efforts.

Samuel Byrskog, in his excellent study, *Jesus the Only Teacher*, takes an in-depth look at the Jewish backgrounds of what is meant by being a disciple.²⁹ The fact that Jesus, the teacher/Rabbi, calls together a group of followers that become His disciples is similar to what other Rabbis and itinerant Jewish teachers did at the time. Byrskog writes,

Jesus is primarily the teacher of his own chosen disciples. To be sure, the didactic storyline (In the Gospel of Matthew) depicts him also as a teacher handing over teaching to other persons: he teaches openly; he enters into discussions and conflicts. But he addresses his teaching mainly to his own disciples. They are his pupils, expected in a special way to carry –first by receiving and understanding – his teaching.³⁰

There are three aspects of the Rabbi/Disciple relationship that are critical to our understanding of the Great Commission. The first involves the duty of the disciple to speak on behalf of their Rabbi, under his authority. The second is to make other disciples. The Rabbi, at a certain stage in the disciple's growth,

27 Ann Spangler and Lois Tverberg, *Sitting at the Feet of Rabbi Jesus: How the Jewishness of Jesus Can Transform Your Faith*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2009).

28 Alfred Edersheim. *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*. Vol. all. (McLean, VA: MacDonald, 1886 and 1983).

29 Samuel Byrskog, *Jesus the Only Teacher: Didactic Authority & Transmission in Ancient Israel, Ancient Judaism & the Matthean Community* (Coniectanea Biblica New Testament Series) Paperback – August 1, 1994.

30 Ibid., p.234.

goes beyond sending the junior disciple to deliver messages on behalf of the Rabbi and calls upon the junior to gather their own group of younger disciples and to pass along the teachings of their Rabbi.

Finally, the disciple was not only taught to understand what their Rabbis said, but to also obey his teachings based upon the Scriptures. The disciples were to go beyond a mere cognitive understanding of the Rabbi’s teachings and to observe and obey what they were taught. It is important to understand that in Jewish thinking, belief and understanding are subordinate to obedience. The moral imperative of Jewish life – behavior over belief – was as common in the first century as it is today. Judaism is a religion of obedience to the Law and not the gathering of religious knowledge.

Byrskog confirms the above by stating,

Most significant was the duty (of the disciple) to minister to the teacher... It was accordingly of vital importance for a student to attend to the needs of the Rabbi. Certain texts even claim that the rabbis considered those who did not fulfill this duty—no matter what knowledge had been acquired—like uneducated people; they had no part in the world to come; they were liable to death. The pupil was to do for the Rabbi the same services as an ordinary slave, though in order not to be mistaken for a non-Jewish slave he might at certain places be released from some menial tasks such as untying the sandals of the Rabbi.

The duty to minister was not external to the actual studies. On the contrary it was an integral part of learning Torah. The action of the master, though occasionally idiosyncratic and exceptional, was normative teaching. The pupil did not learn only by listening to the words. He was also to observe and be a witness to his teacher’s actions... According to Mishna Abot 6:6, the pupils learn the Torah through 48 qualifications, including the ministry to sages.

The integration of these acts into the Torah study itself suggests that the basis of validation residing outside of the



life and status of the teacher. Torah, in its various forms, not the Rabbi himself was the focus of attention. The teacher was of interest primarily as the embodiment of Torah in words and deeds... the implicit validation expressed in the active ministry to the teacher was essentially not an acknowledgment of the life and the status of the teacher, but of the teacher's ability to transmit Torah.³¹

This system, so prevalent in the first century where a Rabbi/Teacher gathers a community of disciples who both serve the Rabbi and learn from the Rabbi is at the very heart of understanding the Great Commission. Jesus called His disciples to create new communities of like-minded disciples who would adhere to the interpretations of the Torah they learned from their Rabbi/Teacher – Jesus. The making of disciples was the way in which Jesus would disseminate His teachings to the Jewish people and then, in a most stunning expansion of the model, to spread His teachings among the Gentiles as well.

However, it must be remembered that devotion to the Torah (the Five Books of Moses) and, more importantly, Jesus' interpretation of the entirety of the Old Testament Scriptures was to be the focus of the disciples' task. A disciple's loyalty to their Rabbi was to be subordinated to their love for the Torah and in particular their Rabbi's interpretation of Torah. Jesus' authority rested on His person in a unique manner, as He was the fulfillment of the Torah. This elevated the disciple/Rabbi relationship to a new level. Yet, at heart, Jesus still taught His disciples to follow His interpretations of the Torah, wherein lies His true divine authority (Matthew 5:17-19).

The commission therefore, was a call to create a new community of disciples, from every nation, who would serve the risen Rabbi and have their lives shaped by His teachings.

31 Samuel Byrskog, p.89-92. See his use of extensive quotes from rabbinic sources on these matters.

John Stott adds,

For in preaching the Gospel we preach Christ so that men are converted to Him and become His disciples. We can never get away from, or grow out of, this elementary truth that evangelism is preaching Jesus Christ and making disciples of Jesus Christ. The central objective of all Christian evangelism is to secure the allegiance of men and women neither to a church nor to a system of thought or behavior, but to the person of Jesus Christ. Discipleship of Jesus Christ comes first; the church membership, the theology, the ethical conduct follow.³²

One could debate whether or not a disciple of Jesus should be more loyal to the person of Jesus or to His teachings. However, this is a false dichotomy in this instance, as we are not simply following any human Rabbi, but rather God incarnate and therefore His interpretations of the Word are congruent with His person as would never have been the case with any other Rabbi (John 1:1-3). The first century Jewish Rabbi claimed authority from the Torah, or from another venerated teacher, but Jesus is the living Torah and needed to make no additional claim of additional authority (Hebrews 1:1-3). In His case, both the teachings and person are united as we follow the Person and His teachings, for they are one and the same.

Jesus’ disciples – the ones we are to go out and make disciples – must be taught loyalty and devotion to both the written and living Word.

Baptize

Whereas, making disciples is primary, the baptizing of these new disciples is also of critical importance to Jesus. The commission

32 Stott, Berlin Conference, Part 2, <http://www2.wheaton.edu/bgc/archives/docs/Berlin66/stott2.htm>



continues by calling upon His disciples to baptize, as Matthew writes,

baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, (βαπτίζοντες αὐτοὺς εἰς τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ καὶ τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος,

The Greek word used by Matthew, *βαπτίζοντες*, is a participle governed by the verb *μαθητεύσατε*, “to make disciples” and therefore is a key aspect to the commission given by Jesus to His Jewish disciples. The disciples would have understood the importance of baptism as it was an every-day part of the religious life of first century Jewish life and observed in a variety of contexts for both men and women.

Understanding the importance of baptism within first-century Jewish life is also critical in understanding why Jesus emphasized the ritual. One only needs to visit the Southern steps in Jerusalem to see the multitude of baptismal pools to understand how important Jewish ritual immersion was to the first century Jewish community. Baptism was an inauguration ritual and an external indicator of an internal change demonstrating, in this instance, a cleansing of one’s heart and life. Much has been written this about the first century Jewish understanding of baptism³³ and there is no need to add to the already excellent and available studies on the topic.

The church has also interpreted baptism in many ways: sprinkling, immersion, for babies, adults who profess faith in Jesus the Messiah, etc.³⁴ One of the most important elements

33 See:

1) Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John. A Commentary* (2 Vols.), (Baker Academic, 2010), 440-448

2) R. Alastair Campbell, “Jesus and His Baptism” in *Tyndale Bulletin* 47.2 (Nov. 1996) 191-214, http://98.131.162.170/tyndul/library/TynBull_1996_47_2_01_Campbell_JesusBaptism.pdf

34 See the following:

1) G.R. Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament* (Wm. B. Eerdmans

of baptism is that it was a community event and, therefore, the internal change was given expression by both outward observance and public witness.

In his address to the Berlin conference, Stott reminds us that baptism is both personal and corporate, as the disciples are to win and disciple yet also incorporate new believers into the new *Jesus communities* planted.

Further, whatever the precise significance of baptism may be (and doubtless our particular convictions on this matter are to some extent divergent), we would all agree that baptism is essentially a public act. People may become disciples of Jesus secretly, but they must be baptized publicly. At the very least, baptism is the public confession and public acknowledgment of those who claim to be Christ’s disciples, and thus admits them into the visible church. So in advancing from discipleship to baptism, Jesus moves from the private to the public, from the personal to the corporate, from conversion to church membership.³⁵

Teach

Jesus adds an additional task to the commission by calling upon His disciples to teach the members of these new spiritual

Publishing Company, 1973)

2) *Believer’s Baptism: Sign of the New Covenant in Christ*, ed. Dr. Thomas R. Schreiner and Shawn Wright, Series: New American Commentary Studies in Bible & Theology (Book 2) (B&H Academic; annotated edition, January 2007).

3) John Stott and Alec Motyer, *The Anglican Evangelical Doctrine of Infant Baptism*, Latimer Trust.

4) John Stott, “The Evangelical Doctrine of Baptism,” *Churchman* 112/1, 1998 http://archive.churchsociety.org/churchman/documents/Cman_112_1_Stott.pdf

5) John Stott, *Baptism And Fullness: The Work of the Holy Spirit Today*, Michael S. Horton (Foreword), (IVP Classics Paperback November 2006).

35 Stott, Berlin Conference, Part 2, <http://www2.wheaton.edu/bgc/archives/docs/Berlin66/stott2.htm>.



communities, as Matthew writes, *teaching them to observe all that I commanded you* (διδάσκοντες αὐτοὺς τηρεῖν πάντα ὅσα ἐνετειλάμην ὑμῖν). Stott comments on this third aspect of the disciples' mission – to teach the newly baptized disciples, διδάσκοντες αὐτοὺς, all He taught them with the goal to bring about a transformation of their character and behavior.

The purpose of Christ in the Great Commission is not fully met, however, when people are discipled and baptized; they must also be taught. A lifetime of learning and obeying follows conversion, until disciples are conformed to the image of their Lord. Moreover, the substance of the teachings to be given them is all the teaching of Jesus Christ, “all things whatsoever I have commanded you.” Notice carefully what we are to teach converts. It is neither what they may want to hear, nor what we may want to say, but what Christ Himself has taught. This is what they are to “keep,” that is, to believe and to obey.³⁶

Stott points out where we can find the “curriculum” we are to use in discipling and teaching these new believers.

Where, then, is all the teaching of Jesus Christ to be found? The correct answer is not in His discourses in the Gospels,” but “in the whole Bible.” Properly understood, the teaching of Jesus Christ includes the Old Testament (for He set His seal upon its truth and its authority), the Gospels (in which His own words are recorded), and the rest of the New Testament (which contains the teaching of the Apostles through whom, we believe, He continued to speak, in order to complete His self-revelation).³⁷

I concur with Stott's conclusion to this discussion of the three major tasks of the Great Commission; to make disciples, baptize and to teach – for the sake of observance and obedience. He writes,

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

Such is the risen Lord’s concept of evangelism--a conception considerably more balanced and comprehensive than much of our modern practice of evangelism. Jesus sent forth His followers not merely to make disciples--discipling was only the first stage of the Great Commission. Two further stages were to follow, namely, baptizing and teaching. The evangelist who would be loyal to his commission, therefore, must have three major concerns: first, conversions to Christ; second, the church membership of converts; and third, their instructions in all the teaching of Christ. While it is legitimate no doubt for sporadic evangelistic missions and crusades to concentrate on their first concern, it would be irresponsible to do so unless adequate provision is made also for admitting converts to church membership and for instructing them.³⁸

Blomberg also agrees with Stott,

The verb “make disciples” also commands a kind of evangelism that does not stop after someone makes a profession of faith. The truly subordinate participles in v. 19 explain what making disciples involve: “baptizing” them and “teaching” them obedience to all of Jesus’ commandments. The first of these will be a once-for-all, decisive initiation into Christian community. The second proves a perennially incomplete, life-long task.³⁹

This is a more holistic approach to the Great Commission. Clearly our job begins with the preaching of the Gospel. I would view preaching for conversion or proclamation as implied by the Great Commission though not explicitly stated. There is no reason why Jesus could not have said, “*Go therefore, proclaim the Gospel and convert sinners, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you*”, if that was His intention.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Craig Blomberg, *Matthew*, p 431.



Yet, the Savior chose to state the task in a different way that includes proclamation implicitly. The task of evangelism, however, would remain a part of the Commission and not the whole commission. To equate the Great Commission with what we usually understand as evangelism leading to personal conversion is to misunderstand the Commission. So those who equate the Great Commission as synonymous with proclamation fall short of the Savior's instructions. The casting of the Great Commission by Jesus in Acts 1:8 calls upon the disciples to be His witnesses. Jesus says,

...but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.”

Again, this term would include proclamation and more – even as the term *μάρτυς* would later become synonymous with self-sacrifice and death.

This does not minimize the good and godly efforts at evangelism⁴⁰ of those who have this vision, calling and giftedness. Nor does it lessen the value of those who view their ministry as focused upon helping believers grow in their faith. And those called to planting and nurturing churches – the more corporate aspects of what Stott describes – are not doing less for the Savior if they are not quite as active in engaging nonbelievers in their community because of their responsibilities to the saints.

The Great Commission demands each of the aforementioned ministries, yet believers vary in giftedness and ability. It is

40 The following is a good definition of evangelism in the traditional sense: “Evangelism is the announcement, proclamation, and/or preaching of the gospel (1 Corinthians 15:1-4), the good news of and about Jesus Christ. Therefore, the gospel is a communicated message--communicated in verbal (Luke 7:22; Romans 10:14-17) and/or written (Luke 1:1-4) form.” <http://carm.org/what-is-evangelism>.

the responsibility of disciples to be engaged in the overall Commission though they might focus on a part to which they feel specialty called.

We must follow our calling by better understanding how God has designed and gifted us. Through prayer, Bible study and seeking wise counsel we must discover where we best fit in with this Great Commission. If we tend to focus on one area of the Commission we should not see ourselves as in any way deficient. What we do personally in fulfilling the Great Commission does not change the evident truth of the text – that Jesus has called His early and modern disciples to win the lost to Jesus, to baptize them and help them find their place in the Body of Christ and then to nurture those who come to faith through teaching them the Word of God, so they become obedient disciples.

Chris Wright adds to our understanding by reminding us that the Great Commission is not the work of the clergy or mission professionals but the responsibility of all of Jesus’ disciples,

So the discipleship and mission that Jesus calls us into is for the whole of life. If Jesus is Lord of heaven and earth then there is no place, no job, no vocation, no day or night, no part of life at all, that is exempt from the rest of what he says in the Great Commission and all that it refers back to in the rest of the Gospel. Mission is not an agenda, to be tackled by people assigned to ‘do it for the rest of us’. Mission is the mode of existence for the whole life of every member of the whole church.⁴¹

Finally, the best way to accomplish these Great Commission tasks is by modeling. We cannot help people become what we are not and therefore our own growth as disciples, and thereby disciple-makers, is never over!

41 <http://www.loimission.net/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Chris-Wright-IntegralMissionandtheGreatCommission.pdf>, p. 20, Accessed August 2014.



THE PROMISE OF HIS PRESENCE
TO THOSE WHO GO

Jesus concludes His commission to the eleven with a promise to be with them until what is often translated as “the end of the age.” It is this promise that we want to focus upon as it directly pertains to our topic: The Coming Kingdom and the Great Commission.

Jesus says,

and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. (καὶ ἰδοὺ ἐγὼ μεθ’ ὑμῶν εἰμι πάσας τὰς ἡμέρας ἕως τῆς συντελείας τοῦ αἰῶνος.)

Stott concludes his comments on the text as well by warmly focusing on this promise of the Lord’s presence in fulfilling the Great Commission,

“I am with you all the days”—in days of safety and of peril, days of failure and of success, days of freedom to preach and days of restriction and persecution, days of peace and of conflict and war—“I am with you all the days unto the end of the world.” The promise of Christ spans the whole Gospel age. While the Christ who is speaking has only just died and been raised from death, He even now looks ahead to His return in glory. He who has just inaugurated the new age promises to be with His people from its beginning to its end, from its inauguration to its consummation, “even to the close of the age”.⁴²

As a pastor’s pastor, Stott and others who preach and teach on these few words at the conclusion of the Commission, emphasize the comfort the saints will enjoy through the presence of Jesus’ indwelling Spirit in their hearts as they go about fulfilling this *Great Commission*. As His disciples we are grateful that the Spirit of the Lord is with us: giving us power (John 20:21-23, Acts 1:8

42 Stott, Berlin Conference, Part 2.

etc.), boldness (Acts 4:31) and the confidence of knowing that though invisible, He is our ever-present partner in the work of turning the hearts of men and women to Jesus (John 16:5-11).

Charles Simeon, also a *pastor’s pastor*, emphasizes the enjoyment and comfort God brings through His Spirit to those in the process of fulfilling the Great Commission. Simeon writes,

The Lord Jesus Christ will be with his Church and people “even to the end of the world,” and every faithful minister may expect from him all needful direction and support. He will “give testimony to the word of his grace,” and will clothe it with power divine, that it may effect that for which he has sent it. However weak in itself, it shall in his hands “be quick and powerful, and sharper than a two-edged sword.” It shall be as “a hammer or a fire that breaketh the rock in pieces.” In dependence on him therefore we go forth, expecting assuredly, that, notwithstanding the weakness of those who deliver it, “it shall be the power of God to the salvation of those who hear it. “Were it not for this encouragement, no man, possessed of reason, would presume to undertake the office of a minister: but depending on Christ’s promised aid, we do hope that our labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.”⁴³

This is certainly a comfort for all who are serious about fulfilling the Great Commission. Leon Morris, as true of most modern commentators reflecting on this passage, does not further explore the eschatological details implied in the phrase, “end of the age.” He writes what may be understood as a fairly typical view of this promise,

This Gospel opened with the assurance that in the coming of Jesus God was with his people (1:23), and it closes with the promise that the very presence of Jesus Christ will never be lacking to his faithful follower. This does not, of course, mean that Jesus has not been with his people hitherto; he has made it clear that where two or three are met in his name

43 Charles Simeon (1832–1863). *Horae Homileticae: Matthew*, Vol. 11, London: Holdsworth and Ball, 619-620.



he is there, right in the middle of them (18:20). But when Matthew draws his Gospel to its close, he has nothing in the way of an ascension account. He emphasizes the importance of his continuing presence and concludes his Gospel with the magnificent assurance to the followers of Jesus that that presence will never be withdrawn; he will be with them always, to the end of the world and to the end of time.⁴⁴

However, there is more to tease from this conclusion to the Commission in Matthew 28:20.

THE CONSUMMATION OF THE AGE

Jesus concludes His instructions to the earliest disciples by assuring them of His faithful presence throughout their lives and for the disciples they make as well. In fact He promises that He would *be with* His followers, by His spirit, until the consummation of the ages.

Matthew writes,

and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.
(καὶ ἰδοὺ ἐγὼ μεθ' ὑμῶν εἰμι πάσας τὰς ἡμέρας ἕως τῆς
συντελείας τοῦ αἰῶνος.)

Jesus outlines His plans for the *συντελείας* earlier when asked by His disciples, “*Tell us, when will these things happen, and what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?*” (Matthew 24:3). The term used for the “*end*” (*even to the end of the age*) as it is often translated in English⁴⁵, is the Greek word *συντελείας*. This word could be translated simply as “the end” meaning: conclusion, fulfillment, the goal achieved, etc.,

44 Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew* (Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press, 1992), 749-750.

45 ESV, NASB, NIV, “end of the age,” KJV, “end of the world”

emphasizing the Greek term τέλος, which is part of the compound term συντελείας.

However, συντελείας has a different nuance as it adds the prefix συν, meaning *together with*, which encourages us to translate συντελείας (or συντελεία, the nominative form) to mean “consummation.” This understanding of the term would place a greater emphasis on the series of events included as part of the culmination of the age.⁴⁶ The term refers to a series of events and not simply a conclusion to what has gone before.

Matthew used the term in Matthew 24:3 in reference the series of events linked to the second coming of Jesus outlined in the Olivet discourse.

As He was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, “Tell us, when will these things happen, and what will be the sign of Your **coming**, and of **the end** of the age?”(τῆς σῆς **παρουσίας** καὶ **συντελείας** τοῦ αἰῶνος).

⁴⁶ In response to the question, is there is a difference between Greek words τέλος (tel'-os) and συντελείας (soon-tel'-i-ah) used at Matthew 24:14 and 28:20 respectively? Can they refer to the same thing? Do they have the same derivation?

If you are asking whether τὸ τέλος and ἡ συντελεία τοῦ αἰῶνος in Matthew 24:14 and 28:20 respectively refer to the same point of time prophetically, the simple answer is yes. τὸ τέλος and ἡ συντελεία τοῦ αἰῶνος are used interchangeably in vv. 3, 6 and 14 in Matthew 24. Since ἡ συντελεία τοῦ αἰῶνος has a uniform meaning throughout the New Testament, we have the equation τὸ τέλος in Matthew 24:14 = ἡ συντελεία τοῦ αἰῶνος in Matthew 28:20. However, τέλος in the NT is not always identical with ἡ συντελεία τοῦ αἰῶνος, even in a prophetic context. Matthew 24:13-14 reads 13ὁ δὲ ὑπομείνας εἰς τέλος οὗτος σωθήσεται. 14καὶ κηρυχθήσεται τοῦτο τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τῆς βασιλείας ἐν ὅλῃ τῇ οἰκουμένῃ εἰς μαρτύριον πᾶσιν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν, καὶ τότε ἔξει τὸ τέλος. The second τέλος is the equivalent of ἡ συντελεία τοῦ αἰῶνος but the first τέλος is not. It rather refers to the end of the earthly life of each believer (cf. John 13:1: Πρὸ δὲ τῆς ἑορτῆς τοῦ πάσχα εἰδὼς ὁ Ἰησοῦς ὅτι ἤλθεν αὐτοῦ ἡ ὥρα ἵνα μεταβῇ ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου τούτου πρὸς τὸν πατέρα, ἀγαπήσας τοὺς ἰδίους τοὺς ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ εἰς τέλος ἠγάπησεν αὐτούς, where τέλος refers to the end of Jesus' earthly life) (<http://www.ibiblio.org/bgreek/forum/viewtopic.php?f=6&t=2635> Re: Greek words rendered at Matthew 24:14; 28:20 as “end” at Matthew 24:14; 28:20 by Leonard Jayawardena » July 7, 2014, 12:48 am.)



Again, the meaning of συντελείας, especially in this passage⁴⁷, is best translated by the English phrase, “the consummation of the age.”⁴⁸ In other words, Jesus will be with us (by His Spirit) unto the consummation of the ages... when He returns. This is especially true when used with the word παρουσίας (parousia), translated, “your coming” in Matthew 24:3.⁴⁹ This slightly different English translation portrays the συντελείας as an event in itself and not simply as the conclusion of what was previous. The disciples understood this and it is why they ask, “*Tell us, when will these things happen, and what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end (consummation) of the age?*”

In response to their question, Jesus details the various signs attached to *consummation of the age*. This is critical as the command to “Go” now takes on a greater urgency emphasizing the *soon-coming* events of the end rather than His daily presence with us – as wonderful as this is for the disciples. The comforting presence of the Lord in carrying out of the Commission tends to turn our eyes inwards rather than to what is coming: the συντελείας, the consummation of the ages which is at the heart of our motivation for carrying out the commission. It is recognizing what is ahead that compels us to Go!

47 καὶ ἰδοὺ ἐγὼ μεθ’ ὑμῶν εἰμι πάσας τὰς ἡμέρας ἕως τῆς συντελείας τοῦ αἰῶνος.

48 *synteleia*. Outside the Bible this word means ‘common accomplishment’ (also ‘taxes’), ‘cooperation,’ ‘execution,’ ‘completion,’ ‘conclusion.’ In the LXX it has such varied senses as ‘execution,’ ‘totality,’ ‘satiety,’ ‘fulfillment,’ ‘conclusion,’ ‘cessation,’ and ‘destruction.’ In Daniel LXX it is a technical term for the eschatological ‘end’ (cf. 11:35; 12:4), though it may also mean ‘end’ in a more general sense (9:26). It is a technical apocalyptic term in the Testaments of the Twelve, sometimes with the thought of completion. The NT uses the term only in eschatological sayings. In Hebrews 9:27 Christ’s saving work is the event of the end time. The juxtaposition stresses its definitiveness and perfection. In Matthew the phrase ‘end of the age’ (13:39; 24:3; 28:20) refers to eschatological events that have yet to take place, including the judgment (13:39-40, 49). *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament: Abridged in One Volume* (Olive Tree software version), ed. Gerhard Kittel, Gerhard Friedrich, Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; Abridged edition, 1985).

49 And “*tou ainos*” in 28:20.

By using the word consummation, we give greater shape to the expectation of His literal and physical return. This is why Jesus spends two chapters describing the details of the συντελείας, Matthew 24-25. The συντελείας should be viewed as an event in itself and not simply a conclusion to what has gone before. It is in knowing what is ahead, in specific detail, that we find the urgency of heart that drives us to fulfill the Great Commission. I am concerned that a neglect of the specifics of God’s future plan, especially regarding the return of Jesus, will lull the church to sleep and cause us to believe we have “all the time in the world” to accomplish our task.

These plans for the consummation weighed heavily on the minds of the disciples as well as the Messiah and we must ask ourselves, “why are today’s disciples so disinterested in the great prophecies of scripture describing the events of the very last days?”

After all, Jesus and the disciples were very concerned about the coming of the future kingdom. The future Messianic kingdom was woven into the very core of first century Judaism, influenced by the Old Testament itself as well as first century Jewish Messianic expectation; inter-testament literature, the Dead Sea Scrolls and early Rabbinic literature. These expectations surfaced at an almost feverish pitch at the time of Jesus’ first coming and yet today, concern for the future has been generally minimized by a rising cynicism within the church that disparages preaching about the second coming and the core themes related to the συντελείας.

When our expectation of the συντελείας is shaped and informed by Scripture we will be motivated to go out and make disciples. This was the intention of the Savior, which is why He linked the commission to our future hope. As Evangelicals we need to embrace the future God planned for us. Jesus mentions



this future many times in the Gospels.

In an article in *Jesus.org*, popular American preacher and pastor, Chuck Swindoll writes,

These facts from biblical prophecy about Christ's return may surprise you:

One out of every 30 verses in the Bible mentions the subject of Christ's return or the end of time.

Of the 216 chapters in the New Testament, there are well over 300 references to the return of Christ.

23 of the 27 New Testament books mention Christ's return.

Christ often spoke specifically about His own return to earth.

Throughout the centuries, Christ's disciples and followers have adamantly believed, written, and taught that Christ would someday return to earth.

The Bible teaches it. The Lord Jesus stood upon its truths. The apostles declared it and wrote about it. The creeds include it and affirm it.⁵⁰

Swindoll is correct in his assessment. The future is a major concern among the authors of Scripture. Therefore, what should we expect? What is coming? What are the events attached to or part of this coming consummation of human history?

The following is a representative summary of the events, divided between those events that are commonly agreed upon by Christians and others which are debated.

I. Matters Commonly Agreed Upon

A. Growing tribulation and hardship on earth
(1 Thessalonians 5:2-9; Revelation 3:10; 11:18)

⁵⁰ <http://www.jesus.org/early-church-history/promise-of-the-second-coming/does-the-bible-teach-that-jesus-will-return.html>.

- B. The Anti-Christ (2 Thessalonians 2:8ff; Revelation 13:11-15)
- C. The physical return of Jesus (Matthew 19:28; 24:30-31; Luke 12:40)
- D. The lifting of the curse upon earth (Isaiah 65:17-25; Matthew 19:28; Revelation 21)
- E. The establishment of the Kingdom (Daniel 2:34-35, 44; Isaiah 9:6-7)
- F. The resurrection of the dead (John 5:28-29; 1 Corinthians 15:52)
- G. The national repentance of the remnant of Israel (Romans 11:26; Zechariah 12:10 -13:1)
- H. The Great White Throne Judgment (John 5:22; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Revelation 20:11-15)
- I. The Binding of Satan (Revelation 19:20; 20:1-3)
- J. The arrival of the Saints from Heaven with Jesus (Matthew 24:31; 1 Thessalonians 4:14)

II. Debated Matters

- A. The Rapture of the Church (John 14:1-3; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18)
- B. The Rebuilding of the Temple (evidence for Temple: Matthew 24:15; Revelation 11:1-12)
- C. The *Millennial* Temple (Zechariah 6:12-13; Isaiah 6:1-5; Ezekiel 43:1-5)
- D. The attack by the nations against Israel (Zechariah 12:1-9; 14:3; Ezekiel 38 – 39)
- E. The return of the Jewish people to the Land of Israel (Ezekiel 34:11-13; 37:1-14; Isaiah 11:11-12)
- F. The re-establishment of the literal Davidic throne in Jerusalem (Jeremiah 23:4-6; Isaiah 11:1-5)
- G. The Gentiles coming to Jerusalem to worship the Messiah and participate in the events of the Jewish calendar (Zechariah 14:12-20; Micah 4:1-4)



Again, one could include additional events or leave out others and even switch the above categories, but the list give us an idea of the critical events usually associated with the second coming or period immediately afterwards. In some Christian circles the above events have been minimized or viewed as having already been fulfilled either literally or in some spiritual sense⁵¹ and are therefore viewed as speculative.

These events are also deemed less important than how we live our lives and whom we help each day. This has led to a dearth of serious study on the future and diminished preaching on the subject from our pulpits, giving rise to a generation of believers that know very little about the coming consummation and therefore do not think about the second coming and events surrounding the consummation of the ages. This has diminished our sense of urgency in the preaching of the Gospel and turned our ministries towards good activities but reduced our attention to more direct Gospel proclamation. This is not as true among those groups that continue to emphasize the soon return of the Lord.

Yet, the future is important to God and it should be important to us as well. The future must shape our present! When we lose a future-oriented perspective and neglect to study eschatology with an eye for the details of Jesus' second coming, we lose the urgency attached by Jesus to the Great Commission.

51 Those, like American theologian RC Sproul, who take a Preterist view of the Book of Revelation and Olivet Discourse would view many of these events as taking place before 70 AD.

JEWISH EVANGELISM, THE FUTURE
AND THE GREAT COMMISSION

One of the most critical areas of study must be the role Israel and the Jewish people play in the events and details attached to the consummation. Ignoring the future Jesus envisions for Israel and the nations, which includes the literal establishment of the Davidic Kingdom, promised in 2 Samuel 7:14ff and 1 Chronicles 17:10-15, Psalm 89, etc., and further developed in the writings of the prophets (Isaiah 42, 44, 49, 60-65; Jeremiah 31-35; Ezekiel 36-39, etc.), short circuits our understanding of what we teach new disciples until He comes about what will happen when He comes. If we minimize the teaching of the Old Testament in our disciple making by spiritualizing the coming kingdom, de-literalizing the Abrahamic and Davidic promises of God to Israel, then the events of the συντελείας τοῦ αἰῶνος will be non-specific and unclear.

By minimizing or spiritualizing the details of the consummation, we excise the literal role of the Jewish people from God’s plans for the future. Therefore we need to seriously consider the role Jewish people will play in God’s plans for the planet.

Has God abandoned His covenant people because of unbelief and disobedience? Or, is there still a particular purpose God has for Jewish people today? Are the Jewish people one *ἐθνη* among many in the fulfillment of the great Commission, or do the Jewish people still have a biblically defined role in the συντελείας.

Paul, a Messianic Jew himself, responds to his own questions in Romans 11:1 by describing the future salvation of the Jewish people and the impact this will have on the rest of the world and argues in Romans chapter 11 more particularly that the salvation of the Jewish people will be the precursor to the second coming



of Christ and therefore have a critical role in the fulfillment of God's ultimate purposes for the world.

¹² Now if their transgression is riches for the world and their failure is riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their fulfillment be! ¹⁵ For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?

I can only imagine that this is the event Paul had in mind when he penned Romans 1:16. Knowing the future plan of God, the Church should somehow prioritize Jewish evangelism, especially as we see the day of His second coming drawing near.

Bringing the Gospel to the Jewish people *first* should not be viewed as a *priority of privilege*, but as a *priority founded on the Lord's strategy to heal a world broken by sin*. God chose the Jewish people for a special role and one day this will become evident as the end-time remnant of Jewish people repent and the Lord returns (Zechariah 12:10, Isaiah 9:6-7, Acts 3:19 ff.).

This gives us insight into Paul's statement earlier in Romans 11:11.

I say then, they did not stumble so as to fall, did they? May it never be! But by their transgression salvation has come to the Gentiles, to make them jealous.

As mentioned earlier, according to Paul's statement in Romans 11:11, the Gentiles are called to make the Jewish people jealous of Jesus living within them. The Lord chose the Jewish people to reach the Gentiles, but the Jewish people failed, so He sent His Son, the greatest Jewish person who ever lived, to complete the task. And now He calls upon Gentiles who believed the Gospel through a remnant of Jewish people to bring the message back to the original messengers!

How will the church fulfill this mandate to prioritize Jewish

evangelism and make Jewish people jealous? What practical steps can be taken to give the church around the world a passion for reaching Jewish people with the message of the Jewish Messiah? The turning of the Jewish people to Jesus is one of the great and final events included as part of the συντελείας.

CONCLUSION: OUR FUTURE HOPE AND THE GREAT COMMISSION

We have less time left to fulfill the Lord’s command to make disciples among the nations than we think. And it is this very sense of urgency that will motivate us to complete the task. Yet, we are in great danger of losing this urgency if we continue to minimize or spiritualize God’s future plan. In essence, this future hope is as much a part of the great Commission as the command to make disciples and is mentioned by Jesus to provide both comfort and motivation. The Lord is encouraging His disciples to fulfill the Commission with dispatch and urgency as the planned events for the συντελείας are unyielding, inevitable and unstoppable and will soon be upon us.

If we do not have the end in mind then we will not do the work He has called us to do with dispatch or urgent enthusiasm. Human need can only motivate global evangelism to a certain extent as there are billions needing Jesus who will never hear because their material needs are not apparent. We have become more concerned with the present than the future. We feed the body and attempt to free captives from various forms of social slavery, but these expressions of love and grace alone will not save a person. It is the burning hope of heaven and fear of hell rooted in the soul of the disciple and part of Jesus’ teaching about the “consummation” and the end of the age that will move the Church to complete her task.



To balance the above, we also understand that our ministry to those suffering in this present world, motivated by the love and compassion of the Messiah resident in our hearts, is also of great importance. Historically Christians have had great difficulties combining our love for people and belief in the “harder truths” of eternal judgment in determining our strategies to fulfill the Great Commission. We need to take both sides of this eternal equation into heartfelt consideration.

Clearly, the mood in the church has shifted over the last 50 years. Today’s disciples are generally uncomfortable discussing biblical prophecy, heaven and hell, and trend towards accepting some type of *eschatological agnosticism*. If asked, most believers will tell you they do believe in the physical return of the Lord and the establishment of the kingdom, but if you ask anything further you might be told that it is enough to know the future is coming and we should not debate the specifics. It seems that any discussion about the literal second coming of Jesus that goes beyond acknowledging that the event will take place is viewed with skepticism and those interested in the topic are viewed as having an obsession to discover unknowable future events.

A concern for studying, preaching or discussing the details of events surrounding the second coming of Jesus is often deemed inappropriate and unhealthy as it takes the eyes of Evangelicals off of a suffering humanity and the problems of today. There is an underlying attitude that suggests we should be more concerned about today rather than tomorrow – which is *unknowable*. Because of this perspective many Bible teachers write and speak about the end times in the murkiest of terms, as end-times events are considered difficult to interpret, divisive and at times, fanciful.

Admittedly, the Church might be over-compensating for what has been an overzealousness and imbalance in 20th-century

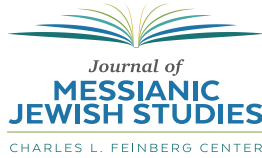
prophetic Bible teaching and more specifically, during the last half of the 20th century, with the formation of the modern state of Israel. *Yet, we should not throw out the baby with the over sensationalized prophetic bath water!* It is time to recalibrate our reading of Scripture and return to a deep concern and even a longing for the συντελείας mentioned in our text and the events surrounding the second coming of Christ. We cannot dismiss gaining a biblical understanding of the future because of the errors of the past. We must be concerned about the συντελείας as the future is part of what Jesus told His disciples to teach to their new disciples. The πάντα ὅσα ἐνετειλάμην ὑμῖν includes His teachings about His coming and the need to prepare for this eventuality.

By studying the details of the consummation we will help our disciples develop a greater sense of urgency for the Gospel. They will be less cynical and understand that though the *signs of the times* at times may have been misread by overly zealous believers, they are still a critical part of the full counsel of God for which we will be held accountable to teach our disciples.

We should be motivated in our proclamation by love for both God and man, yet we should also have a rightful fear on behalf of those who do not believe as the συντελείας brings with it both great blessings to those who believe and judgment to those who do not. It is this imminence of the future that drives us to preach the Gospel with greater urgency.

What are we to do with our time until this συντελείας arrives? Jesus has called us to persuade a sinful and broken world that they not only need to believe, but to learn, follow and observe (obey) what He said. May the Lord help us fulfill the task!





The Coming Kingdom and the Hope of Israel

Calvin L. Smith

KEYWORDS:

| The Kingdom of God | Israel | Romans | Hope |
| Eschatology | Biblical Theology | Day of the Lord | Zion |

ABSTRACT:

The purpose of this paper is to set out a case for the hope of Israel in the eschatological future. The primary focus in this paper is Romans, the climax of the Apostle Paul's discussion and argument concerning ethnic Israel in Romans 9-11, in addition this is framed by drawing on other biblical texts. The aim is to set the scene — and provide a summary in terms of biblical theology — for the case for God's calling and purpose for the Jewish people, with a special focus on the eschatological place of Israel as set out in Romans 11. In so doing we will establish precise contextual definitions for key terms: Israel, Supersessionism/Nonsupersessionism, Christian Zionism, and Restorationism, and how this relates to the resolution the Apostle Paul sets-out in Romans 11: Israel is inextricably intertwined in God's eschatological scheme. The conclusions of this paper will serve as a basis for more detailed hermeneutical and theological treatments of this and related topics in later papers presented at this conference.



AIMS AND PURPOSE¹

The purpose of this paper is to set out a case for Israel's hope in the eschatological future. Although drawing on other biblical texts, my primary focus in this paper is Romans 11, which is the climax of the Apostle Paul's discussion and argument concerning ethnic Israel in Romans 9–11. My aims here are modest, namely, to set the scene and provide a summary biblical theology case² for God's calling and purpose for the Jewish people, with a special focus on the eschatological place of Israel as set out in Romans 11. This will serve as a basis for more detailed hermeneutical and theological treatments of this and related topics in later papers presented at this conference.

DISCLOSURE

I approach this issue from a premillennial but also a non-dispensational perspective (I lean towards post-tribulationism). My position, then, is hardly one typically associated with the main pro-Israel stereotypes sometimes bandied about in much of today's debate. Arguably much of that debate has become oversimplified whereby nonsupersessionism, Christian Zionism and pro-Israel camps are all bunched together (often pejoratively) under a dispensationalist banner. Yet the reality is far more complex than such parodies suggest, so now seems an appropriate time to set out some terminology before proceeding.

1 This paper is presented in a conference talk format and as such references are minimal. A list of further reading is included at the end of the paper.

2 Biblical theology is defined here as tracing biblical themes across the unfolding revelation of Scripture, with a focus on canonical, or diachronic (over synchronic) interpretation.

TERMINOLOGY

i. Israel

The term can be used in various ways, none of them mutually exclusive and which sometimes overlap considerably (whether “the Jewish people”, “ethnic Israel”, or sometimes in the field of theology “national Israel”. In short, in this paper I will use the term “Israel” to define those who identify themselves culturally, historically, religiously and ethnically as Jews.³ So in a biblical theology discussion of Israel we do not using the term to refer to the modern State of Israel, but rather the Jewish people as a whole. That said, with perhaps around fifty per cent of the world’s Jewry living in what today constitutes the State of Israel, neither can that political entity be cavalierly dismissed in this discussion. In any discussion of God’s calling and purpose of the Jewish people, the Middle East state—where half of the world’s people who identify themselves as Jews live in their ancestral homeland—remains absolutely relevant to this discussion.

I recognise that the question “who is a Jew?” is a perennial one which has been discussed at length by the Jewish people, where definitions and disagreements revolve around Jewishness as an ethnic, religious, cultural, political and/or geographical characteristic(s). My own view is that it combines elements of all these. However, time and other constraints do not allow us to delve into this issue now, so for the purposes of this paper we will simply define “Israel” as the Jewish people.

3 Craig Blaising offers a similar definition of “Israel” in “The Future of Israel as a Theological Question”, *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 44.3 (Sept 2001), 435.



ii. Supersessionism

This is the view that God no longer retains a plan and purpose for the Jewish people (national Israel). It comes from the Latin for sitting over or upon, the idea being it means to replace or supersede another—in this case the theological view that the Church replaces Israel as the people of God. Supersessionism is sometimes referred to as replacement theology.⁴

In his useful *The God of Israel and Christian Theology*, the scholar R. Kendall Soulen moves beyond supersessionism as an over-arching term to identify three variations.⁵ The first is *punitive supersessionism*, the view that the replacement of the Jews with the Church was a punishment for the former's rejection of God (e.g., through idolatry) in the Old Testament and/or Jesus as Messiah in the New Testament. Previously the harsh position and language of this punitive supersessionist view, which was dominant in the medieval Christian era, might have been referred to as "hard supersessionism". Conversely, particularly in the wake of the Holocaust, some Protestants have moved away from the language of hard or punitive supersessionism to speak instead of Israel's role in God's economy of salvation as having been completed or fulfilled. Soulen refers to this as *economic supersessionism*, while its softer tone (albeit still triumphalist in that it still maintains God's wholesale replacement of the Jewish people) previously earned the title "soft supersessionism". Soulen's third definition is *structural supersessionism*, based on a hermeneutical reading of the canonical narrative whereby some aspects of Scripture are placed in the foreground and others are

4 For an important examination and critique of the history and theology of replacement theology see Michael Vlach, *Has The Church Replaced Israel? A Theological Evaluation* (Nashville, TN: B&H, 2010).

5 R. Kendall Soulen, *The God of Israel and Christian Theology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1996).

relegated to the background. In this classic canonical reading of Scripture dominant throughout much of Church history, then, covenant, eschatology and the Old Testament tend to be downplayed, and with them (given how it features so strongly in these topics) the role of Israel in the Bible.

I would suggest punitive supersessionism is making somewhat of a comeback, with “hard” supersessionist language perhaps more widely used than ever since the end of the Holocaust. One is also struck by how many Palestinian and pro-Palestinian Christians (including some Evangelicals) often draw on the language of punitive supersessionism in their demonisation of the modern Jewish state. Meanwhile the BDS (Boycott, Disinvestment and Sactions) efforts, which anti-Zionists are so involved in, is in some ways reminiscent of the boycotts of Jewish businesses in 1930s Europe.⁶ A key difference is how the word “Jew” has been replaced by “Israel”; but listening to how the words such as “Zionist” or “Israel” are used, it is clear that in some cases they are replacements for “Jew”, thus reflecting how elements of anti-Semitism remain among segments of Christendom.

iii. Christian Zionism

This is the theological view that God has brought (or will bring) the Jewish people back to their ancestral homeland in the Middle East. It is based on biblical and theological arguments and therefore is the religious counterpart of political Zionism, which seeks a Jewish homeland on political grounds. It is vital to recognise that Christian Zionism comes in many shapes and sizes and cannot be presented as a simplistic, homogenous expression

⁶ For a helpful (but disturbing) treatment of the re-emergence of waves of punitive supersessionism in Europe see Colin Barnes, *They Conspire Against Your People: The European Churches and the Holocaust* (Broadstairs, Kent: King’s Divinity Press, 2014).



as many have sought to parody it in the current battle of ideas and simplified political narratives.

iv. Restorationism and Nonsupersessionism

Restorationism is the view that God retains a plan and purpose for the Jewish people, that He will somehow restore His people in his eternal plan. However, restorationism can take several forms. Some, on the basis of Acts 1:6, believe God will physically restore the Kingdom of Israel in a geographical sense—a view which falls within parts of the Christian Zionist camp. Other restorationists, however, focus on the people rather than the land, which they maintain can be regarded as incidental. Others may argue God *will* restore the Jewish people to the land, where they will be in the eschatological future. However, they state that we cannot be certain the modern State of Israel is such a restoration, or indeed if we are actually in the end times. A further complication is that elsewhere in theology, in the subdiscipline of Pentecostal Studies, restorationism is the view that God is restoring to the Church all of the apostolic gifts and callings.

Therefore, given these complications I prefer the word “nonsupersessionism” as an umbrella term to identify those who believe God retains a plan and purpose for the Jewish people, whether Christian Zionist or not. It is not particularly ideal to identify oneself by what you are not, but in this case seems the best way forward to avoid confusion.

ROMANS 11

Having established this important background we can now move on to Romans 11. But before we do so, we need to consider briefly what Jesus said shortly before the ascension, in Acts 1:6-8:

So when they had come together, they asked him, “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

It is important to note that Jesus is speaking here to the disciples (now the apostles), who had lived and fellowshiped with and been taught by their Master for three years. The ascension represents the culmination of their period of discipleship under Jesus and marks the beginning of the new task of apostleship as leaders of a new Church. This is a significant moment as Jesus shares His last thoughts with them immediately before He is taken up to heaven.

So when they asked Jesus if now is the time the kingdom was to be restored to Israel, either they got it spectacularly wrong (in which case one would naturally expect these newly-qualified apostles would have been corrected by Jesus as was so often the case in the Gospels), or else they were not wrong at all, that indeed their expectations (if not timing) were correct. After their three-year discipleship period in preparation for this moment, one struggles to see how—if they were so woefully wrong in their understanding—the matter would be left as it is in Acts 1, with Jesus immediately leaving to their own devices (and to run His new Church) a group of disciples who had just proved they had failed their apprenticeship.

Instead, the passage naturally suggests that the disciples’ expectation of a hope for Israel was not erroneous at all, rather simply the timing. The passage indicates they were thinking “Israel’s hope here and now”, whereas Jesus’ words indicate a future hope for Israel, a hope that is projected into the eschatological future. Note, for example, Jesus’ reference to the



“times and seasons” fixed by the Father, echoing similar phrases in Matthew 24:36 and 1 Thessalonians 5:1, significantly both eschatological in context. Likewise, Paul suggests a future hope for Israel in Romans 11 when he states: “A partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And in this way all Israel will be saved” (11:25b-26a). It is to this future, eschatological hope in Romans 11 we now turn. We begin with some background to this important chapter.

BACKGROUND TO ROMANS 11

Romans 11 is the culmination of an argument set out by Paul over three chapters (9–11). Arguably, the general consensus today is that the entire focus of this section of Romans is upon ethnic, or national, Israel (note Paul’s several references to his kinsmen according to the flesh in 9:1-5). One important exception is the scholar N. T. Wright who ascribes Israel with different meanings even within the space of a few words in the latter part of Romans 11. There is insufficient space to become distracted on this issue here, and it seems best to leave the matter to another well-known scholar and friend of Wright’s (Larry Hurtado) who makes the following observation:

I find this friend for whom I have great admiration unpersuasive in his handling of this material. It is remarkable that, per his view, in Romans 11:25a the “Israel” upon whom a “hardening” (against the Gospel) has come = the Jewish people, but (within only a few words) the “all Israel” who shall be saved in 11:25b = the church (composed, to be sure, as Wright emphasizes, of gentiles and those Jews who, like Paul, accept the Gospel). Shifting the meaning of “Israel” within one verse, that’s going some!⁷

7 Larry Hurtado, “Paul and Israel’s Salvation: In Dialogue With Tom Wright”, Larry Hurtado’s blog (18 April 2012). Available at <https://larryhurtado.com>.

Hurtado also makes the point that however one views—or disagrees with—Paul’s views on this issue, it is important to let Paul speak for himself rather than seek to change the meaning of Paul’s intent to make his views more palatable. It is indeed an important point for biblical scholars to bear in mind. Another point I would make is that this demonstrates the dangers of synchronic over diachronic interpretation, focusing upon and basing a doctrine on a short passage or meaning of a single word, rather than building a more robust doctrinal case upon a canonical/biblical theology theme. A final (and somewhat unrelated point) here is how Paul devotes around a fifth of his seminal epistle to the Romans on this issue, which directly challenges those who maintain the New Testament has little to say about national Israel.

ROMANS 11 AND ESCHATOLOGY

So what has Romans 11 to do with the future, or eschatological, hope of Israel? On the surface this chapter does not immediately appear to focus on eschatological matters; and, arguably, we could instead explore Israel’s future hope in, say, several lengthy Old Testament apocalyptic passages or perhaps look at the theme of Israel in the New Testament book of Revelation. Yet upon closer examination Romans 11 *is* thoroughly eschatological in its dealings with the future hope of Israel. Consider the evidence:

First, Paul’s argument across Romans 9 to 11 seems clearly to divide across three stages of time (which the later inserters of chapters and verses seem to have recognised from the natural progression of Paul’s argument across this section of Scripture).



Thus Romans 9 focuses on Israel's past, Romans 10 on her present state, while Romans 11 shifts focus by and large to Israel's future.

Next, in Romans 11 Paul juxtaposes a *remnant* of Israel in the *here and now* (11:5) with the *future* salvation of *all Israel* (11:25-27). We can go further. As the chapter progresses the apostle juxtaposes a *firstfruits* of Israel being saved (11:15-16) with the *whole lump* in the future (their full inclusion, 11:12). Here Paul is drawing on an Old Testament concept of the firstfruits of a sacrifice compared with the later and full, or complete, offering. Surely, too, it is not insignificant that "firstfruits" also has eschatological connotations elsewhere in Scripture, notably Christ as the firstfruits of the resurrection when He was resurrected, which is compared with the resurrection of all humanity at the end of time (see 1 Cor 15). Likewise, a remnant of Israel is saved now (the firstfruits), with Paul proclaiming the fullness of Jews ushered into the kingdom in the future.

Another feature of Romans 11 indicating an eschatological theme in Paul's mind is his partial quotation in 11:26-27 of Isaiah 59. Paul quotes Isaiah as a basis of Israel's future salvation. Significantly, the very Isaiah passage he cites sets out the future judgment, coming of the Lord and the salvation of Israel (59:19).

Finally, Romans 11:25-26 refers to "time of the Gentiles". This choice of words echoes very closely Luke's choice of words in his eschatological treatment in 21:24. Note that Luke's context here, which strongly echoes much of the material in Matthew's great eschatological discourse (Matt 24-25), is clearly eschatological, pertaining to the eschaton (or end times). So in summary, in Romans 11 Paul affirms categorically that God has not rejected national Israel (11:1), going on to juxtapose her present condition with her future hope (see figure 1).

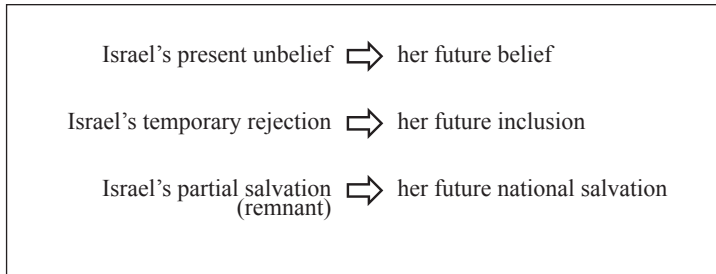


Figure 1

Thus, the apostle culminates with the climax of Romans 9–11 in 11:25-27:

Lest you be wise in your own sight, I do not want you to be unaware of this mystery, brothers: a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And in this way all Israel will be saved, as it is written, “The Deliverer will come from Zion, he will banish ungodliness from Jacob”; “and this will be my covenant with them when I take away their sins.”

But it is not just Romans 11 that discusses Israel’s future hope and salvation. This ***Day of the Lord + national Israel + her salvation*** formula appears in numerous biblical passages, notably Isaiah 59 (see above), Ezekiel 36:22-29 and arguably Jeremiah 31:31-34. These texts detail not only the cleansing of Israel, but also God putting upon them His Spirit. Thus we read in Zechariah 12:10, 13:1 (note again yet another eschatological passage relating to the future hope of Israel, in the context of her cleansing):

And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on me, on him whom they have pierced, they



shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn...

"On that day there shall be a fountain opened for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and uncleanness.

SUMMARY OF WHAT WE ARE SAYING

That Israel is inextricably intertwined in God's eschatological scheme. This is a twin theme which runs through much of Old Testament, Acts 1:6, Romans 9–11, the book of Revelation and various other passages we have commented briefly upon (and many we have not). So not only is Israel a major biblical theme running across both Testaments, it is also projected into the eschatological future where her fortunes are inextricably intertwined with God's eschatological dealings with the nations.

Given this link between Israel and eschatology, it is hardly surprising that traditions and churches that tend to downplay eschatology also relegate Israel to the sidelines. Indeed this is precisely the point Soulen makes, where a distorted canonical narrative that relegates Israel (and eschatology) to the background all but writes Israel out of God's entire story, as expressed across the whole of the Bible's unfolding revelation. I am sure many of us here can identify individual churches with a weak emphasis on eschatology. The chances are also that there will be a weak (or missing) treatment of the biblical theme of Israel.

To recap, then, Israel's future hope is her national salvation (cf. Zech 12:10). Note how, through Israel, God demonstrates His salvific plan. Indeed it is through Israel that we receive salvation; as Jesus stated to the woman at the well, "Salvation is from the Jews" (John 4:22). God raised the Jewish nation, through who comes a Jewish Messiah, to bring salvation to the world. If God's

salvation of humanity, and all that represents, is everything that Satan despises, and Israel was instrumental in bringing that salvation to this world, who would Satan most likely make war upon? I find it striking how Revelation 7 speaks of the dragon attacking the woman (Israel) and then making war on her other offspring. In their excellent book, David Torrance and Howard Taylor identify how two of the most godless ideologies of the twentieth century—Stalinism and Nazism—likewise made war on the Jewish people. It is all the more concerning, then, when people, in the name of Christianity, seek to demonise Israel. It is not legitimate criticism of Israel that is the issue (which is wholly acceptable), or even that such people subscribe to supersessionism (a position I consider biblically unsustainable but which, in itself, does not, in my view, constitute heterodoxy or inclinations towards anti-Semitism). Rather, it is the singling out of the Jewish state as the causer of all ills, to the detriment of every other conflict, and how Israel is irrationally held to a different standard than any other nation.

This aside and moving on, if, as Jesus stated, “salvation is from the Jews” it seems only fair it comes back to the Jewish people one day, which is precisely the point Paul seems to make in Romans 11. Today, a remnant is saved; but, eschatologically, national Israel as a whole will be (or as Paul refers to them, the unbelieving branches, the “whole lump”), at which stage it is important here to emphasise the national, rather than universal, salvation of Israel. The former refers to the nation as a whole; the latter refers to every single Jewish person. Paul’s context is clearly corporate, not individualist, meaning the congregation or nation will one day be saved (my colleague Andy Cheung discusses grammatically the phrase “all Israel” in my edited volume on supersessionism⁸).

8 Andy Cheung, “Who is the ‘Israel’ of Romans 11:26” in Calvin L. Smith, ed.



WHAT WE ARE NOT SAYING

That there are two ways of salvation: i.e., through both Moses and Christ, a doctrine known as dual covenantalism. Orthodox Christianity maintains that salvation comes only through Christ (John 14:6), which is why Paul always preached the gospel in the synagogues during his missionary journeys recorded in Acts.

Neither are we equating the modern, secular State of Israel wholly with biblical Israel. Clearly, as we have pointed out, “Israel” means more than those living in the Middle Eastern state, with as many Jewish people outside modern Israel as within it. Yet neither are we saying modern Israel has no bearing whatsoever on this discussion. As noted earlier, approximately half of all the Jewish people in the world live in that state in the Middle East.

Third, it is not suggested or argued that modern Israel is sinless, or demanded that Christians take an “Israel right or wrong” position. If even biblical Israel sinned, it is folly to suggest today’s Jewish state is perfect. It is not. No state is, indeed no human institution is.

Finally, I am not suggesting the issue of Israel is or should be a test of orthodoxy (as a minority on the Christian Zionist fringes seem to make it). That said, the more I see the world demonise Israel and excuse far worse things going on in the world—while many of those who demonise Israel also tend to oppose Christian values—the more I am convinced this is becoming a seminal issue for believers today.

In conclusion, Romans 11, I believe, sets out the future hope of Israel. Note too, towards the end of his three-chapter argument, how Paul wraps up his argument by highlighting God’s covenant

with the Jewish people (11:27), extended nationally on account of the Patriarchs (11:28). Having established this historical act of grace towards the Jewish people, Paul ends by stating that the callings and gifts of God (in this case His calling of Israel) are irrevocable (11:29). In other words, he tells his audience, God has not finished with Israel.

Further Reading

BROADLY NONSUPERCESSIONIST

- Scott Bader-Saye, *Church and Israel After Christendom: The Politics of Election* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1999).
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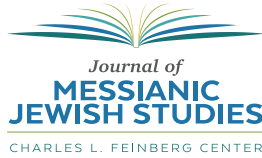
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The Coming Kingdom in Jesus' Words

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KEYWORDS

| Kingdom of God | Eschatology |
| Israel | Jesus | Acts |

ABSTRACT

Noting that the kingdom is already, not yet and that Jesus' outline of what is to come only starts the biblical discussion of the end, this study traces six themes from Jesus' teaching on the Kingdom to come. It also considers some "until" texts in Luke-Acts that show hope for Israel's restoration. Finally there is a look at Acts 1:6-8 showing Jesus taught the hope for Israel's restoration. The hope of the end is the hope of shalom, justice, and the vindication of the saints.

INTRODUCTION

To discuss the coming Kingdom in Jesus' words in a short lecture is a little like saying, "Cover the reality of the universe in fifteen



pages.” Here is what Jesus scholars recognize as the major theme of Jesus’ teaching. As we heard from Derek Kinder, what Jesus has to say about the kingdom is that it is now and not yet, as it was arriving with his ministry but would be consummated in the future. One of the innovations of Jesus’ teaching on the kingdom is that what the OT tended to present as one package and side by side, Jesus split up into a process that involved his two comings. Understanding that the coming and saving work of the Messiah, the eschatological figure of promise, would not take place all at once, but in two comings, is one of the things that Jewish people struggle to understand about Jesus. When they question Jesus being the Messiah because *shalom* and deliverance have not come in full, they are struggling with seeing that the kingdom comes in two steps: arrival and consummation. So getting what Jesus says about the kingdom is important, not just for eschatology, but for understanding the program of God in terms of salvation.

I will briefly mention antecedents to the kingdom hope in Judaism and the already arrival of the kingdom with Jesus before turning our attention to themes tied to the consummation. I will then close with a very important discussion on Acts 1:6-8. I begin with a caveat. The epistles fill in detail on the end that Jesus does not cover. We know this because Paul in 1 Thess 4 refers to revealing a word of the Lord when he discusses the taking up of the saints in that text. This means that what he reveals is fresh prophetic revelation. The Word of the Lord is a technical expression in the OT in many contexts for a prophetic declaration (Gen 15:1; Isa 1:10; Jonah 1:10). In addition, the book of Revelation goes into a great deal of detail about the end that Jesus does not address. So not everything we know about the end comes from Jesus. This observation is important because those who argue to build an eschatology starting and ending with Jesus in a Christocentric focus risk missing what gets added to

the eschatological calendar by later revelation. The very fact we have the book of Revelation as the last part of the NT canon should alert us to the fact that what Jesus says about the end is important, but what is said about the end does not end with Jesus. What we do know is that for Jesus, the end is ultimately about the completion of God's faithfulness in redemption and the vindication of the righteous.

JEWISH ANTECEDENTS TO THE TERM KINGDOM OF GOD

Interestingly, the term "kingdom of God" is not that prevalent in the Hebrew Scriptures. In fact it does not appear once! References to your kingdom (Ps 45:6), His kingdom (Dan 6:26), or to an everlasting kingdom (Dan 2:44) do exist. What is emphasized is God's rule and the hope of *shalom* in a dynasty out of the house of David to come (2 Sam 7:7-17; Ps 2 and 100; Dan 2 and 7). What Second Temple Judaism said primarily of the kingdom is that it would be a time of judgment for the nations and of vindication of the saints (*1 Enoch* 9:4-5; 12:3; chap 25; 27:3 81:3, tied to a Son of Man figure in chaps. 39-71; *Pss Sol* 17-18; *2 Baruch* 36-40; *4 Ezra* 7:28-29; 12:32-34; 13:26). Satan will be defeated in that time (*Assumption of Moses* 7-10). As we shall see, Jesus will reinforce these themes and work with many of them. To invoke the kingdom is to look to the deliverance of the saints from her enemies, something Luke 1:68-75 also affirms in the words of that hopeful saint Zechariah, father of John the Baptist, when he looked for the deliverance out of the house of David from all our enemies so we could serve God "without fear in holiness and righteousness all the day of our lives" (vv. 74-75).



ARRIVAL:
THE ALREADY KINGDOM

The already arrival of the kingdom is tied to Jesus' presence and activity. So in Luke 11:20, he says that if he casts out demons by the power of Beelzebul, then the kingdom of God has come upon (*ephthasen*) them. The key verb here *phthanō* means to arrive or reach a goal (Rom 9:31; 2 Cor 10:14; 1 Thess 2:16). In Luke 17:20-21, he makes the point that people do not need to hunt to find the kingdom of God for it is in their midst. In his parables of the leaven and mustard seed, the kingdom starts out small, like a small mustard seed or a pinch of leaven, and grows into a place where one can find shelter or that permeates the whole loaf. These teachings picture the in-breaking of the kingdom with the coming of Jesus. John the Baptist is the last of the old era as the law and prophets were until John, but now the kingdom is preached (Matt 11:12; Luke 16:16). At the Last Supper, Jesus says the new covenant is poured out in his blood, clearing the way for the forgiveness and promise of God to give the enabling power of the Spirit to those who are now cleansed by his work (Luke 3:16; 22:19-20; 24:49; Acts 1:4-5; 2:30-39; 11:15-18). Luke 14:15-24 shows that Israel's rejection does not postpone the kingdom; the invitation to sit at the banquet and celebrate blessing takes place now with others now invited, even as those seemingly first in line have missed the blessing in the current time because they did not come when invited.

In sum, God's active rule begins with Jesus' work, involves the coming of the Spirit, and points to the defeat of Satan. It functions on the earth today in a limited way among those in whom the Spirit of God is active. The active realm of the kingdom is in the believing community, but there is a claim Jesus has on all people because he is God's chosen one in the way of salvation

(Matt 7:13-14, 21-27). For evidence of the claim on all people, Jesus says the seed of the kingdom is sown in all the world, which is the field for the sowing of kingdom presence (Matthew 13:38). To fail to enter into that realm now means exclusion from blessing later, when the consummation comes.

CONSUMMATION:
THE NOT YET KINGDOM TO COME

In thinking about the consummation and Jesus' teaching, I'd like to survey six points that emerge from what the gospels record.

First, when we think of the consummation of the kingdom program, the words of Jesus introduce a tension between its being imminent, capable of coming at any time, even soon, and the idea that it will be long enough that some will lose faith. Numerous parables portray the coming as something for which one must stay alert because the exact time is unknown and its coming is unexpected and sudden. So images are used like a thief coming in the night (Luke 12:39; Matthew 24:43). It will be visible and sudden like lightening (Luke 17:24; Matthew 24:27). It will be unexpected (Luke 12:40; Matthew 24:44) It will be like the days of Noah and Lot, when judgment comes suddenly in the midst of life (Luke 17:26-30; Matthew 24:44). The vindication is soon and yet long enough that when the return takes place, Jesus asks if the Son of Man will find faith when he comes (Luke 18:8). The suggestion is that some will not persevere by the time the return happens. Part of the point about the immediacy of the return appears to be that it is the next thing on the eschatological calendar. Yet the gospel must make it way into all the world (Mark 13:10; Matthew 24:14). This is not something that can be figured out, despite the many efforts of people trying to do so.



Jesus said even the Son does not know the time along with the angels (Mark 13:32). If Jesus does not know, we cannot figure it out. So the call is to stay alert since you do not know when it will take place (Mark 13:33).

Second, the consummation is a time of judgment and redemption by the Son of Man. Much of the end of the Olivet Discourse makes this point, as the elect are gathered from all the corners of the earth (Matthew 24:29-31; Mark 13:24-27; Luke 21:25-28), as do parables about the separation that comes to humanity at the end. So wheat is separated from chaff and good fish from bad fish (Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43, 47-50). What is redemption for the elect means judgment for those who have not embraced the hope of God. The saints are gathered as people are separated into sheep and goats in a parable that expresses the separation in terms of the nations (Matthew 25:31-46).

Third, associated with the events of the end is the desecration of the temple by the antichrist, a person standing where he ought not be (Matthew 24:15; Mark 13:14). The event is described in a pattern prophecy where Rome's destruction of the temple in AD 70 is seen as a parallel to what the desecration of the end will look like (Luke 21:20). The language of the abomination of desolation in Matthew comes from Daniel 9:27 and points to the antichrist figure. The model for this eschatological picture was Antiochus Epiphanes, whose march into the Holy of Holies at the start of the Maccabean War in 167 BC was seen as desecration of the highest order. In the end, there will be chaos around Israel as there was then. The text also assumes a temple rebuilt by the time of the end.

Fourth, the apostles will judge the twelve tribes of Israel in the consummation (Matthew 19:28; Luke 22:28-30). The apostles may be facing persecution now but vindication will come when they exercise authority over the nation. Jesus' coming and their association with him gives them this coming prerogative.

Fifth, Israel is judged until she says “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord” (Luke 13:34-35). This is a vitally important text. It presents Israel’s rejection as temporary and assumes that one day she will turn back to God. The picture is of an exilic- like judgment as the desolate house is language from Jeremiah 12:7 and 22:5-6. The picture is of Jerusalem under judgment and overrun. It is the realization of the threat made in Luke 13:6-9, that if the nation did not bear fruit she would be cut out of the garden. In context, she is unprotected as she failed to allow God to gather her under his protective wings. Exposed, because of unbelief, she is under and succumbs to pressure from the nations. This is not just the temple that is in view. Acts 2:36 shows how house can refer to people. The context here, throughout Luke 13, is of the nation’s lack of response.

There is more to that judgment than a building; a nation is at risk until she returns to embrace the sent Messiah as the one to come sent by God. However, the very fact that an “until” is uttered shows Jesus anticipates a turning back one day. In Acts 3:18-22, Peter issues a call for such a turn to Israelites living in the time of Jesus. Nothing about what is said here allows for any form of a dual covenant that says Jews are blessed as a people simply because they are Jewish. To share in redemption, they must respond to the redeemer and Savior-Messiah God has sent. A second Lucan “until” text adds to this picture. In Luke 21:20-24, Jesus declares that Jerusalem will be trampled down until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled, a remark that suggests that there will be a future time when Israel will again be front and center in God’s program. There is no other way to explain these “until’s” that can explain their presence, especially when placed alongside Romans 9–11 as that has to be about ethnic Israel for Paul is discussing those he weeps over and longs to see saved. That cannot be a redefined Israel in any sense.



Finally, this is the time of salvation for the saints; the vindication Jewish texts always longed for at the end with its hope of *shalom*. Luke 21:28 says when the Son of Man returns, they can lift up their heads for redemption is near. Matthew 24:31 says this will be the time when the Son of Man gathers his elect from the four corners of the earth.

There is precious little detail here other than the result. Judgment comes. The righteous are affirmed and delivered. All is made right in the world. A separation takes place among people.

This is how Jesus portrays the end. It is God being faithful in vindicating those who have embraced the one he has sent to deliver them.

ACTS 1:6-8: KINGDOM, ISRAEL AND MISSION

A crucial text in thinking about the restoration of the kingdom is part of the last topic Jesus addressed before his ascension. In Acts 1:6-8, the apostles ask Jesus if this is the time he will restore the kingdom to Israel. The very fact this question is asked reveals what Jesus has taught the apostles, for they ask it having spent 40 days with Jesus and with him having expounded the hope of the Hebrew Scripture about the Christ to them (Luke 24:44-49). There is a strand of interpretation that argues that this question expressed the wrong hope. The idea that the kingdom and Israel had a future missed the boat on where Jesus was taking the kingdom program. The question, however, is a natural one given what the Hebrew Scripture taught about the consummation and Israel (Isaiah 42:1; 44:3; 59:21; Ezekiel 36:24-28; 37: 14; the dry bones of chapter 39; Joel 2:28-3:1). Craig Kenner gets this right in his commentary when he says, “Some view this question as

shortsighted, but the context specifies the problem is with timing (Acts 1:7), not with content.” He goes on to note a series of texts in Luke-Acts that affirm hope of Israel’s restoration (Luke 1:32-33; 54-55, 68-74; 2:32, 38; 22:15-16, 30; 24:21) and to argue Luke’s view of eschatology is shared with Paul (Rom 11:15-26).¹ Luke sees a restoration for Israel.² There is no indication in Luke that this was a wrong question or inference about the kingdom program. In fact, Peter’s Spirit-inspired speech in Acts 3 reinforces this view as he preaches a hope for Israel. In 3:18-22 he calls Israel to repent so that the time of refreshing can come to the nation in alignment with what the prophets of the Hebrew Scripture teach. Nothing about what Peter says suggests this reading of hope for Israel needs reframing and applies rather to others.

What is at stake here is the promise, word and faithfulness of God. God made covenant commitments to Israel. Even though it is clear that the gospel, kingdom, and salvation benefits extend to the nations, and fulfillment comes through Christ alone, nothing in making that affirmation means Israel has lost her place and the potential for hope in that program that God initially committed himself to for them in the covenants. Gentile inclusion does not mean Israelite exclusion. One can have both. Scripture affirms both. So does the Christ who stands at the center of all fulfillment.

As we already have suggested, Jesus does not put into question the apostles’ question. He does not challenge its premise. Jesus merely replies that the issue of timing is the Father’s business. He will not tell them when the kingdom will be restored to Israel.

1 Craig Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary: Introduction and 1:1–2:47* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012), 683. So also Eckhard Schnabel, *Acts. Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 76, esp. n. 37. He also lists a series of Hebrew Scripture texts (Isaiah 2:2-4; 49:6; Jeremiah 16:15; 23:8; 24:6; 31:27-34; Ezekiel 34–37; Hosea 2:3; 11:11; Amos 9:11-15; Ps 14:7; 85:2

2 Ibid, 687, “Jesus does not deny that Israel’s restoration will come.”



God will do it in his time. The disciples are not on a need to know basis for this question. The eschatological clock is completely in God's hands.

In the meantime, the disciples have a priority assignment. It is the mission of believers—their calling. It is to receive the enablement, the power which the Spirit of God will give to them and engage in the mission of taking the gospel to the ends of the earth. They are to start in Jerusalem and go to the ends of the earth. The phrase “ends of the earth” has Hebrew Scripture roots from Isaiah 48:20, 49:6—a Servant song, and Jeremiah 10:13. A priority for the disciples over figuring out the timing of the end is mission, taking the gospel into the world, all of it for both Jew and Gentile. Mission and ministry have a priority over eschatological star-gazing. When it comes to eschatology, one is to stay alert because the end could come at any time. The task is not to seek escape from this world but to engage it with the hope of the gospel. Interestingly, this is Jesus' last word about the kingdom program during his ministry on earth. Making sure eschatology is properly prioritized in relationship to mission was a final concern Jesus left for his disciples.

CONCLUSION

In sum, Jesus actually says very little about what the kingdom will be at the end. There will be victory, peace, justice, shalom, and vindication for the righteous. There is no discussion of how the kingdom is structured or what it will be like. The apostolic teaching in Acts and Paul suggests that the OT tells us much of that story. The emphasis is on the accountability and blessing that comes with the consummation of the kingdom. The point is that all will be held accountable for how they have associated themselves with the kingdom and its hope. That situation and

that need is the same for Jew and Gentile.

Still there are a few key points Jesus' teaching about the kingdom to comes makes.

First, Jesus' teaching about the kingdom tells us it comes in stages, not all at once. Things the Hebrew Scripture said Messiah would do that Jesus has not yet done will be accomplished in the consummation phase of the kingdom program that is already and not yet. People cannot charge Jesus with not being the Messiah because things were not done that Scripture said the Messiah would do, because Jesus' kingdom program is not yet complete.

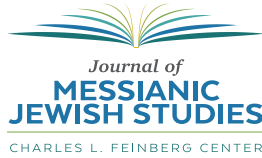
Second, the end will be a time tied to judgment and world conflict swirling around Jerusalem, but also means of vindication for the saints.

Third, the timing of the coming of the consummation of the kingdom is unknown, so those who believe should stay alert to its coming.

Fourth, with the return will come a restoration for Israel in the kingdom program of God. She will turn and embrace her Messiah Jesus. Much of that story is already told and detailed in the Hebrew Scripture. When promise and restoration are raised, that hope and its story are already well known.

Finally, in the meantime, saints are to be hard at work drawing on the enabling power of God's Spirit to preach and represent the gospel to a needy world. For what both the nations and Israel need is to respond to the hope, life, and forgiveness that God so graciously offers through Jesus, Messiah of Israel and Lord of all. So we pray may his kingdom come, may his will be done on earth as it is in heaven. The proper response to eschatological hope is to be engaged in the mission that draws people into that kingdom to come.





The Coming Kingdom and Biblical Interpretation

Craig A. Blaising

KEYWORDS:

Hermeneutics	Israel	Bible-Scripture	
Supersessionism	Speech-Act	Interpretation	
Evangelical	Language	Definition	Promise

ABSTRACT:

This paper, on the Coming Kingdom and Biblical Interpretation, describes the methods used to interpret the Bible. Initially this involves an analytical summary of the historical difference between literal and figurative approaches to Scripture and how an allegorical reading of the Bible was used to minimize the role played by the Jewish people in the plan of God. Typology is used today by a supersessionist approach to the Bible to reject the national and territorial promises of Israel and spiritualize them as being fulfilled in Jesus and thereby the Church. In conclusion we can demonstrate the weakness of this approach and argue for a holistic reading of the Bible in which all of God's promises, including those that speak of the Jewish people and the Land of Israel, are truly fulfilled.



INTRODUCTION

Evangelical theologians basically divide into two camps on the question of the future of Israel: there are those who say that the Bible teaches a future for ethnic and national Israel and those who claim that it does not. Both sides appeal to the Bible in making their cases, which could be somewhat disconcerting. One might be tempted to dismiss the difference as “just a matter of interpretation,” which in modern parlance often means a subjective decision on the order of a preference. However, this would be a mistake for two reasons. First, the subject—national and ethnic Israel—is not merely theoretical but a reality that is vitally important in our world today. Secondly, the question is not peripheral but central to the story line of the Bible. How one answers this question affects how one understands the story of the Bible from its beginning to its end. So, it is “a matter of interpretation,” but one of such vital importance that we need to make sure we are interpreting correctly.

If this was a dispute on the football field or the basketball court, we would turn to the officials for a ruling. In the absence of officials, we would have to consult a rule book, which explains the game and how it is to be played. In our case, we are looking for “rules” of interpretation, and the place to find them is in the many books on hermeneutics, the disciplinary field that addresses the methods and practice of interpretation.¹ In this

1. For an introduction to biblical hermeneutics, see William W. Klein, Craig L. Blomberg, and Robert L. Hubbard, Jr., *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1993); Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., and Moisés Silva, *An Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics: The Search for Meaning* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994); Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1991); G. B. Caird, *The Language and Imagery of the Bible* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1980). On aspects of literary hermeneutics, see Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981; rev. ed. 2011); idem, *The Art of Biblical Poetry* (New York: Basic Books, 1985; rev. ed. 2011); Tremper Longman III, *Literary Approaches to Biblical Interpretation*, Foundations of Contemporary Interpretation 3 (Grand Rapids:

chapter, we will look at some of the principles and guidelines for correct interpretation and see how they might resolve the dispute on how to correctly interpret what the Bible has to say about the future of Israel, its land and people.

TRADITIONAL CATEGORIES

Traditionally, the dispute has been characterized as a difference regarding the correct practice of *literal* and *spiritual* interpretation. Supersessionists, those who believe that the church has replaced ethnic and national Israel in the plan of God so that there is no future for the latter, argue that non-supersessionists, those who see a future for ethnic and national Israel in the divine plan, interpret parts of the Bible literally that are supposed to be understood spiritually. Non-supersessionists reply that supersessionists spiritualize parts of the Bible that should be interpreted literally.²

The problem is often compared to the difference between *literal* and *figurative* interpretation. Most people would know that

Zondervan, 1987); V. Phillips Long, *The Art of Biblical History*, Foundations of Contemporary Interpretation 5 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994). On the broader field of hermeneutics, including philosophical hermeneutics, see Anthony C. Thiselton, *The Two Horizons: New Testament Hermeneutics and Philosophical Description with Special Reference to Heidegger, Bultmann, Gadamer and Wittgenstein* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1980); idem, *New Horizons in Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992). For a recent symposium covering different aspects of the field, see Stanley E. Porter and Beth M. Stovell, *Biblical Hermeneutics: Five Views* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2012).

2. On Supersessionism, see Kendall Soulen, *The God of Israel and Christian Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996); Michael J. Vlach, *Has the Church Replaced Israel? A Theological Evaluation* (Nashville: B&H, 2010); Calvin L. Smith, ed. *The Jews, Modern Israel and the New Supersessionism* (Lampeter, UK: Kings Divinity Press, 2009); Barry Horner, *Future Israel: Why Christian Anti-Judaism Must Be Challenged* (Nashville: B&H, 2008). As an example of the debate in terms of literal vs. spiritual hermeneutics, see the discussions of interpretation in John F. Walvoord, *The Millennial Kingdom* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1959); J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things to Come: A Study in Biblical Eschatology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1958); and Oswald T. Allis, *Prophecy and the Church* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1945).



Robert Burns' famous poem, "My Love is Like a Red Red Rose," is a figurative description of the poet's sweetheart. It would be a mistake, a misinterpretation, to think he was speaking of a bush. On the other hand, if I receive a text from my wife asking me to pick up some potatoes at the grocery store on my way home, and I interpret it figuratively as a request that I stop by the bookstore and purchase a book on hermeneutics for my light reading, that would be a mistake. Knowing when to interpret literally and when to interpret figuratively is somewhat intuitive, but mistakes can be made, and that's when one needs to clarify the "rules" of hermeneutics. This has led to an identification of various figures of speech and figurative genre (types of literature), their customary uses, and ways to recognize them.

The difference between *literal* and *spiritual* biblical hermeneutics has also been compared to the difference between *literal* and *allegorical* interpretation. Allegory is a particular kind of literary figure. It is a story in which the literal elements of the narrative are symbolic of philosophical, religious, or other ideas. John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* is a good example of allegory. Its real meaning, intended by the author, lies on the allegorical, the symbolic level. Consequently, to interpret it correctly, one must read it *allegorically*. One would misinterpret *Pilgrim's Progress* if one thought that it was intended to be a literal narrative history of someone named Pilgrim.

Disputes arose in ancient times on the correct reading of the Greek epics of Homer, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. These epics tell stories of the deeds of gods and men, and many of the ancients took them literally. However, some Greek philosophers, embarrassed by literal interpretations of Homer, suggested that the stories were to be read allegorically as teachings of philosophical ideas.

In the early centuries of the church, the question likewise arose as to whether the Bible should be read allegorically. On

the one hand, Gnosticism taught that behind the façade of the literal narrative of Scripture lay a completely different symbolic world, construed according to the ideas of the particular Gnostic system. Gnosticism was clearly heretical on a number of points of Christian doctrine and Christian churches rejected the allegorical methods of various Gnosticisms as falsely imposing alien ideas upon the text. On the other hand, the church did accept forms of allegorical interpretation within clear doctrinal boundaries. Early Christian supersessionism used allegorical methods to interpret Israel in biblical narrative and prophecy as symbolic of a spiritual people, the church revealed in the New Testament. This way of reading the Bible became traditional in the church, but it came to be challenged in the last few centuries by non-supersessionists as a mistake. They argued that supersessionists *spiritualized* or *allegorized* what should be interpreted *literally*. The terms *spiritual* and *allegorical* were often used interchangeably in this critique.

CONTEMPORARY EVANGELICAL HERMENEUTICS

Today, there is general agreement among Evangelical theologians and biblical scholars that *spiritual interpretation* as traditionally practiced is not acceptable. Evangelicals today are particularly sensitive to the problem of reading ideas into Scripture rather than receiving ideas from Scripture. One should not come to the Scripture and simply read into it what one wants.

In modern times the art and science of interpretation has come to be studied and articulated more carefully with the result that even the categories of *literal* versus *spiritual* are not as useful as they once seemed to be. It's not so much that they are wrong as



that they are not sufficiently precise. It's like attempting to do surgery with flint knives in an age of scalpels and lasers.

So, what are the categories, principles, and methods that characterize evangelical biblical interpretation today? Generally, interpretation is described as a three-way relationship between the author, the text, and the reader. The author has formed the text as a communication to the reader(s). The reader needs to come to the text with a desire to understand what the author has said. Scripture is unique in that it has a Divine author, who superintended its composition. So, we seek to interpret Scripture properly so as to understand what the Author through and together with authors has communicated in the form of its text.

In order to do that, the reader needs to read the text in a manner that accords with its reality. This is often described as a *historical, grammatical, literary* interpretation of the Bible. However, there are a number of other terms that describe the approach. Each is important in explaining an aspect or focus which interpretation needs to take into account. These terms are listed below.

The *historical* nature of interpretation recognizes that language doesn't just come out of the blue; the historical setting of the text provides its linguistic context. An author, a human author, writes within a specific historical setting and makes reference to things of that day and uses language within the vernacular of that day; we need to be aware of the historical situation of the text as we attempt to interpret it.

Interpretation is *lexical*, that is, it considers the definitions of words. The interpreter needs to be aware of all possible definitions, but the precise definition will be clear only in context. Consideration of context takes us first to the *grammatical* level where words are nuanced by grammar to combine in larger syntactical structures. Interpretation is then *syntactical*,

recognizing that sentences and paragraphs are the primary level of meaning.

Interpretation must also take into account the *literary/formal* level of word and sentence combinations. At the literary level, we see how language is structured not just into sentences but into literature. Here one finds various *conventions* of word usage, such as various kinds of metaphor. But also, one notes the larger structural conventions that mark out different literary *genre*—the larger literary forms of poetry and prose. Most people recognize that a poem is a different kind of literature than a report, a letter, a narrative, or a chronicle. Larger works of literature often combine not just multiple words and sentences but multiple genre and multiple conventions. Interpretation of a text requires an understanding of the kind of literature in which a passage is located and the literary relationship it has to its surrounding context.

Interpretation needs to recognize the *performative* function of literary units—words, sentences, and genre. This is an aspect of interpretation that has come under discussion only in the past few decades. Performative studies reveal that words and sentences not only describe things, they also do things.

Thematic is an aspect of contextual interpretation that recognizes that themes weave their way through larger literary structures. Thematic connection in a larger literary work is a context just as important as, and maybe more than verbal proximity. In the Bible, this includes themes such as the “Kingdom of God” or the “Day of the Lord.” How a theme develops through the canon of Scripture will be important to interpreting its appearance at various places in the text.

That brings us to the *canonical* level of interpretation. The canonical level, the whole canon of Scripture is the ultimate context for anything within it. The canon is a collection of



writings that demonstrate not only thematic but inter-textual literary connections. We see this when biblical authors reuse words and phrases from other biblical writings intending to evoke within the reader's mind those earlier contexts and associated patterns of meaning. This is similar to what sometimes happens when someone today quotes popular phrases from a movie or song. More may be intended than the mere repetition of a phrase. The quote may be intended to evoke images, ideas, or emotions associated with the original context of the quotation. We have come to see that connections like this occur in Scripture at the canonical level.

Finally, as we speak of the canonical level of interpretation, we need to note that such interpretation must be canonically *narratological*. Narrative is a literary genre. But we need to note that at the canonical level—a level that contains multiple genres: legal literature, poetry, hymns, historical accounts, and several of other types of literature—the whole Scripture also presents a story. To interpret it correctly requires one to grasp the whole and discern the movement from beginning to end that connects and relates all the parts.

This list of categories, methods, and practices would generally be accepted by most evangelical biblical scholars, including supersessionists and non-supersessionists alike.

EVANGELICAL SUPERSESSIONIST HERMENEUTICS

The difference between evangelical supersessionists and nonsupersessionists is seen primarily at the canonical narratological level of interpretation. Supersessionists believe that a *reality shift* takes place in the overall story of the Bible when one moves from *promise* in the Old Testament to *fulfillment* in the New. In

the Old Testament the story of the Bible unfolds with promises regarding Israel, the land, the people, and the nation. But as the story moves to the New Testament, fulfillment takes place in an alternate reality—a different kind of Israel, one that transcends the land, the people, and the nation. This reality shift is from the material, the earthly, the ethnic, to a heavenly, a spiritual, a non-ethnic reality. It moves from a political, national reality to a non-political, universal reality. It changes from a focus on the particular to a universal focus. When supersessionists say that the promises to Israel are fulfilled in Christ, the church, or the new creation, this kind of reality shift informs their view.

A clear example of this kind of interpretation can be found in W. D. Davies' book, *The Gospel and the Land*.³ Davies acknowledges that the Old Testament covenant promise of land to Israel is clear and explicit. However, he argues that the New Testament shifts the substance of the promise from land to Christ. The territorial promise to Israel becomes "Christified" in its fulfillment.⁴ More recent scholars such as N. T. Wright, Collin Chapman, Gary Burge, and Peter Walker have adopted Davies' view.⁵ The reality shift from a particular territory to a universal new creation, from a particular ethnic people to a new universal people, takes place in Christ in whose person the promises are singularly realized and fulfilled.

3. W. D. Davies, *The Gospel and the Land: Early Christianity and Jewish Territorial Doctrine* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974. See also his *The Territorial Dimension of Judaism: With a Symposium and Further Reflections* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991).

4. *Ibid.*, 368.

5. See for example, Gary M. Burge, *Whose Land? Whose Promise? What Christians Are Not Being Told about Israel and the Palestinians* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2003); *idem*, *Jesus and the Land: The New Testament Challenge to 'Holy Land' Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010); Philip Johnston and Peter Walker, eds. *The Land of Promise: Biblical, Theological, and Contemporary Perspectives* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2000); P. W. L. Walker, ed. *Jerusalem Past and Present in the Purposes of God*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994); P. W. L. Walker, *Jesus and the Holy City: New Testament Perspectives on Jerusalem* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996).



This kind of reality shift in canonical narrative is promoted in Reformed biblical theology, as seen, for example, in the works of Geerhardus Vos and Palmer Robertson.⁶ The influential writings of scholars mostly associated with Moore Theological College, such as those by Graeme Goldsworthy, William Dumbrell, and T. Desmond Alexander, feature this same supersessionism in their presentations of the story of the Bible.⁷

These evangelical supersessionists generally argue that their perception of a reality shift in the canonical narrative is not due to any allegorization they have performed on the text. They do not claim to have read into the text meaning that is alien to it. Rather, they argue that this reality shift in the nature and substance of Old Testament promise is explicitly taught by the New Testament. It is not a matter of the interpreter allegorizing the text, they say, but a matter of the interpreter recognizing a typology embedded in the text.⁸ This typology is a literary convention by which symbolism is recast. The text of the New Testament clarifies the working of this typology by explicitly recasting the symbolism of the Old Testament. The duty of the interpreter is to recognize this typology and incorporate it in the interpretation of the overall canonical narrative.

6. Geerhardus Vos, *The Pauline Eschatology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1930); *idem*, *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948); O. Palmer Robertson, *The Christ of the Covenants* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1980).

7. William J. Dumbrell, *The Search for Order: Biblical Eschatology in Focus* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994); Graeme Goldsworthy, *According to Plan: The Unfolding Revelation of God in the Bible* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1991); *idem*, *Christ-Centered Biblical Theology: Hermeneutical Foundations and Principles* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2012); T. Desmond Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem: An Introduction to Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2008); *idem*, *From Paradise to the Promised Land: An Introduction to the Pentateuch*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002).

8. See Richard Davidson, *Typology in Scripture: A Study of Hermeneutical TUPOS Structures*, Andrews University Seminary Doctoral Dissertation Series 2 (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University, 1981). See also, Stephen J. Wellum, "Hermeneutical Issues in 'Putting Together' the Covenants," in Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2012), 81–126.

Let's look more closely at typology and how supersessionists see it functioning in the Bible. Types are essentially patterns that are repeated in the canonical narrative. Noticing these patterns in the canonical narrative may create something like a *déjà vu* experience in the reader. For example, after crossing the Red Sea, Israel comes up out of the water onto dry land (Ex. 14). But this pattern can be seen in Genesis 1, where God causes the land itself to come up out of the water. It can be seen in the flood narrative, where once again God causes the land to emerge from the water and brings Noah and his family onto the dry land. It can be seen in the Gospels where Jesus comes up out of the water in his baptism. And the pattern is seen in various psalms. This is a repetitive pattern, a narrative type.

The New Testament occasionally uses the word "type" in referring to this kind of pattern. Israel was *baptized* in both the cloud and in the sea and these served as types and examples to us (1 Cor. 10:6). Adam is a type of Christ (Rom. 5:14). The flood is a type of baptism (1 Peter 3:21). But supersessionists see this typology as more than narrative patterns. They cite these passages to argue for a progression in the narrative away from earthly to heavenly realities.

Matthew's use of the word "fulfillment" is cited as evidence for this. For example in Hosea 11:1, the Lord says, "When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son." Matthew applies the verse to the infant Jesus being taken to Egypt to escape Herod and then returning after Herod's death. Matthew says, "Thus it was *fulfilled*, 'Out of Egypt I called my Son' (Matt. 2:15). In supersessionist thought, "fulfillment" brings about a shift in the reality of the referent of Hosea's language. It has shifted in a spiritual and Christological direction away from Israel to Christ.

The references to "shadows" in the book of Hebrews are thought to indicate this same typological progression. Hebrews says that the tabernacle was built according to a pattern, or type, from heaven (Heb. 8:5; cf 9:23–24). Moses was shown this pattern on the mountain, and he built the tabernacle according to that pattern. As a type, the tabernacle is also seen as a "shadow" because the heavenly is fixed, whereas the earthly, like a "shadow" passes



away (Heb. 8:3–13; cf. 10:1). Hebrews is written in anticipation of the destruction of the Temple, and it speaks of the passing away of the things that were made. It is talking particularly about the things made with hands, as opposed to that which is heavenly (cf. Heb. 9:11). However, supersessionists often overlook the fact that Hebrews is not speaking simply of a vertical dualism between earthly and heavenly realities since the writer expects that those heavenly realities are coming here in the future (Heb. 2:5; 13:14). This future coming in Hebrews is consistent with eschatological expectation elsewhere in the New Testament of a future renewal of all things.

The fourth gospel is also cited as evidence of the typological progression. In John 4:21–24, Jesus tells the Samaritan woman that the time is coming “when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship” but “true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth.” Jesus also speaks of himself as the true bread come down from heaven in contrast to the manna that the fathers ate in the wilderness (John 6:31–58). This way of speaking and other imagery in John’s Gospel is thought to show a progression from earthly, particularly Israelitish realities to a heavenly, spiritual reality in Christ.

EVALUATING EVANGELICAL SUPERSESSIONIST HERMENEUTICS

How does one evaluate supersessionist interpretation? If it were a matter of an individual passage of Scripture, the task would be relatively straightforward. One would offer an alternative interpretation of that passage taking into account the words, grammar, syntax, and conventions found there in conjunction with its larger literary context, giving attention to genre,

thematic issues, and broader narratological concerns. However, supersessionism is primarily a conviction held at the canonical narratological level which then construes numerous passages of Scripture in light of its overall reading of the Scripture story. How does one evaluate a comprehensive system of interpretation like this?

In his book, *Epistemology: The Justification of Belief*, David Wolfe offers four criteria for evaluating broad interpretive systems. These criteria are that a system of belief (or interpretation) must be *comprehensive, congruent, consistent, and coherent*.⁹ An interpretive system is strong to the extent that it meets these criteria. It is weak to the extent that it fails to do so. *Comprehensive* means that the interpretive system must cover all the data to be interpreted. In this case, it must cover all Scripture. To the extent that it does not cover portions of Scripture, it is weak at best. *Congruent* means that it must also *fit* the text. If it does not actually fit, if it does not accord with, or is not correct with the text, then again it is weak at best. *Consistent* means that the interpretations produced by this overall reading are not in conflict with one another; they do not contradict one another. Finally, the system must be *coherent*, which is to say that it makes sense.

I believe that supersessionism, as a system of biblical interpretation, is not comprehensive, congruent, consistent, or coherent. The following will briefly illustrate why.

Not Comprehensive

This criterion may seem idealistic. Is it really possible to cover all the data? Can an interpretative system actually address every

9. David L. Wolfe, *Epistemology: The Justification of Belief* (Downers Grove, IVP, 1982), 50–55.



passage, every verse in Scripture? Well, no, we don't really expect that any published work offering an interpretation of the whole story of the Bible will actually cite every passage of Scripture. But that is not what this criterion is saying. Comprehensiveness means that the interpretation does not leave out crucial data in the formulation of its interpretative system. By covering all crucial, or all relevant data, the system may plausibly be said to cover all data, since there would be nothing *left out* that could actually change or alter the interpretative system. Sometimes, however, supersessionist publications omit key texts that arguably challenge their system.

Consider for example, G. K. Beale's recently published *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New*.¹⁰ The book attempts to explain the theological teaching of the New Testament as the fulfillment of the Old Testament. Many passages of Scripture are addressed in his attempt to give an account of the overall biblical story line (the Scripture index alone is thirty-four pages with references in small font size). However, when he comes to Romans 11:25–26, he gives one paragraph complaining that “the passage is too problematic and controverted to receive adequate discussion within the limited space of this book.”¹¹ The book is 1,047 pages long, plus twenty-four pages of front matter! One would think that *this passage* especially would require treatment in an overall interpretation that sees no future for Israel nationally or politically.

Another example can be seen in Michael E. Fuller's *The Restoration of Israel: Israel's Re-gathering and the Fate of the Nations in Early Jewish Literature and Luke-Acts*.¹² The book

10. G. K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011).

11. *Ibid.*, 710

12. Michael E. Fuller, *The Restoration of Israel: Israel's Re-gathering and the*

focuses especially on Luke's narrative concerning the restoration of Israel in both the Gospel and in Acts, examining passage after passage. However, he completely ignores Acts 3:17–26, a passage in which the word *restoration* appears linked to prophesy and covenant promise!

These examples, of course, could be dismissed as the oversights (although major ones) of individual publications. But they illustrate the point that any attempt to offer an overall interpretation of the story of the Bible must take into account crucial texts that speak to the fulfillment of the promises of God to Israel. Failure to address these texts is itself indication that the interpretation may be weak. When it is shown that these very texts refute a central conviction of supersessionist interpretation, that interpretation is seen not only to be weak but wrong.

Not Congruent

The “fit” or lack thereof of an interpretative system to individual texts can only be shown text by text. Evaluating a large comprehensive system of interpretation will necessarily entail the hermeneutical examination of many passages. However, one needs to note that with respect to a system of interpretation, each text does not have equal force. The system may be compared to a spider web, where the cross points of the web represent the interpretations of individual texts.¹³ Showing that the system

Fate of the Nations in Early Jewish Literature and Luke-Acts (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2006). A better book is edited by James Scott, *Restoration, Old Testament, Jewish and Christian Perspectives* (Leiden: Brill, 2001). Although necessarily limited in the texts that it examines, it does feature studies on Romans 11:26 and Acts 1–3. The articles by Richard Baucham [“The Restoration of Israel in Luke-Acts,” 435–87] and James Scott [“‘And then all Israel will be saved’ (Rom 11:26),” 489–527] on these texts are excellent.

13. The use of the web metaphor for logical systems can be found in W. V. O. Quine, *From a Logical Point of View*, 2nd ed. (New York: Harper, 1961). See the discussion in Wolfe, *Epistemology*, 44–45.



is not congruent to a particular text may be seen as cutting the web at that juncture. What will happen? It depends on where the web is cut. Some points can be cut with little damage to the web overall. Other points are crucial to the integrity of the web. They are deeply ingressed into the structure and if rendered unstable, the stability of the whole web is put in jeopardy. In the book you are reading, several chapters address passages of Scripture with respect to the theme of Israel, the land and the nation, and criticisms of supersessionist interpretation are offered therein. But here, I would like to note three problems that challenge the web of supersessionist interpretation at a deep structural level. The first two have to do with the *performative force* of key texts. The third has to do with a central assumption of the supersessionist notion of typological progression. Each problem entails multiple texts that the system must *fit* in order to be considered plausible.

Speech-Act Implications of Divine Promise

Performative language, or speech-act analysis is a relatively recent hermeneutical tool. The philosophers J. L. Austin and John Searle were the formative thinkers whose publications first appeared in the 1960s.¹⁴ Since then, many have utilized and developed the insights both for hermeneutics and for language theory.¹⁵ The key insight of speech-act analysis is that language has a performative force. By language, people not only refer to things, they also do things. And, the paradigmatic example of a speech-act, which Austin himself cited, is a promise.

14. J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things With Words* (Oxford: Univ. Press, 1962); John Searle, *Speech-Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language* (Cambridge: Univ. Press, 1969).

15. See for example, Richard Briggs, *Words in Action* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2001); Thiselton, *New Horizons in Hermeneutics*; Kevin Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998).

A promise entails an obligation. When somebody makes a promise, they're not just stating something, they are doing something. They are forming a relationship and creating an expectation that carries moral obligation. Failure to complete a promise is a violation of one's word. It is a serious matter. Certainly, we can make promises with conditions. The language of promise will make that clear. But once the promise is made, a relationship has been enacted and an expectation has been grounded in personal integrity.

In Scripture, we see that God has made key promises to Abraham and Abraham's descendants. Not only have promises been made, but conventions are followed in order to reinforce the point. A speech-act occurs in God's communication to Abraham in Genesis 12—a promise concerning a land, a people, a nation, and blessing to all nations. In Genesis 15, Abraham questions God about the fulfillment of this promise of a land to his descendants, asking, "How shall I know that I will inherit it?" (Gen. 15:8). So God enacts a covenant with a ceremony, a very ancient ceremony, where God alone passes through the covenant pieces of the sacrifice and takes an obligation on Himself alone. This was so that Abraham would know that his descendants would inherit the Promised Land.

Compare this, for example, to the performative language of a wedding ceremony. As Richard Briggs has noted, when one says in a wedding ceremony "I do," there is no convention by which one can turn around an hour later and say "well, really, I didn't."¹⁶ To say "I do" in the wedding ceremony is to accept formally the marriage relationship. By those words one forms a relationship with another person which has expectations and obligations. Similarly, when God takes

16. Richard Briggs, "Speech-Act Theory," in *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible*, ed. Kevin J. Vanhoozer (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 763.



the covenant upon Himself in Genesis 15, a relationship of expectation is grounded in the integrity of God Himself. Divine intention and resolve could not be more clear. Later, God adds to the ceremonially established promissory word the further convention of a solemn oath (Gen. 22:15–18). God swears that He will accomplish that which he promised. The writer to Hebrews, whose language of “shadows” and “types” (Heb. 8:5; 10:1) supersessionists like to quote, also says that “when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he guaranteed it with an oath” (Heb. 6:17). The promise and the oath are referred to as “two unchangeable things” (Heb. 6:18). To the recipients, these speech acts function as “a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul” (Heb. 6:19). God’s word is certain, which means His people can confidently rely on what He promises.

God’s promise, covenant, and oath to Abraham is not a peripheral element in the story of the Bible. It is a key structural component in the central plot line. It is repeated to the line of patriarchs and is the ground and basis for the covenant at Sinai and the promise and covenant made to David and his house. To postulate a “fulfillment” of these covenant promises by means of a reality shift in the thing promised overlooks the performative nature of the word of promise, violates the legitimate expectations of the recipients, and brings the integrity of God into question. Such an interpretation is not congruent to the textual string of divine promises, covenants, and oaths—a string of texts that lie at the heart of the canonical narrative.

Performative Force of Prophetic Reaffirmation

The second problem for supersessionist interpretation also has reference to performative language, namely the performative

force of prophetic reaffirmation of these covenanted promises to Israel. Not only are the promises made early in the canonical narrative, but in the later narrative they are reinforced by prophetic speech acts of swearing, reaffirming, and emphatically restating God's resolve to fulfill them as promised. The resolve is further underscored in several texts by sweeping rhetorical features like posing impossible odds, unsurmountable obstacles only to dismiss them as trifles to the powerful Creator of all things, and by dramatic scenes, such as the anguish and sorrow of adultery or the pain of parental rejection which in spite of punishment, hurt, and suffering is nevertheless overcome by an unquenchable, triumphant love. The supersessionist reading of the canonical narrative in which Israel is replaced and God's promises are "Christified," spiritualized, or otherwise substantively changed is not congruent with this line of prophetic reaffirmation and restated divine resolve.

*Particularism and Universalism
in the Old Testament and New Testament*

The third problem has to do with the way supersessionist interpretation typically construes the progression of the canonical narrative from particularism to universalism. In this view, the Old Testament tells a story about God's plan for and blessings to one particular people, whereas the New Testament expands the plan and blessing to include all peoples. There is a progression from the particular to the universal, from an ethnic political Israel among the nations to a multi-ethnic, universal Israel inclusive of all nations!

Certainly, much of the Old Testament is taken up with God's promises to and dealings with the particular ethnic people and nation of Israel. And, certainly, we see in the New Testament



a mission to the nations and the establishment of the church inclusive of peoples of all nations through faith in Christ. However, reading the canonical narrative as a progression from particularism to universalism is not congruent with either the Old or New Testaments. From the beginning of God's promise to Abraham, both the particular and the universal are present: "I will bless you . . . I will bless all peoples through you" (Gen. 12:2–3). God's promise to the David house was not just rulership over a particular nation. Rather, the Davidic king is invited in Psalm 2:8, "Ask of me, and I will give the nations as your inheritance." Many Psalms speak of blessing coming upon the nations as do the prophets. The dominion of the coming kingdom of God was predicted to be worldwide (Dan. 2:35), with all nations in their places and in peace (2 Sam. 7:10–11; Ezek. 37:26–28; Isa. 2:1–4). Isaiah foresaw the extension of the favored term "my people" to Gentile nations *in addition to not in substitution of or through redefinition of* Israel (Isa. 19:24–25). This is certainly compatible with John's vision in Revelation 21:3, where many manuscripts read, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be *his peoples*." Similarly, John foresees "*nations . . . and kings of the earth*" in the new creation walking by the light of the Jerusalem come down from heaven (Rev. 21:24). God's plan for Israel and the nations are not mutually exclusive or successive programs but complementary throughout the entire canonical narrative. It is not necessary to eliminate the particular in order to institute the universal nor is it necessary to expand the particular to become the universal, rather, the particular is both the means to the blessing of the universal as well as a central constitutive part of it. How the overall canonical narrative is read needs to be congruent with these and many other texts.

Not Consistent or Coherent

For brevity sake, these two criteria will be treated together. Consistency means freedom from contradiction, and coherence means that the assertions of the system make sense. Many interpretative systems seem to make sense. Usually the problems have to do with how they relate to the data they are interpreting. However, even apart from an examination of the facts, a sign of weakness in an interpretative system is a lack of internal consistency or coherence. Supersessionism is often thought to be a tight consistent, coherent reading of Scripture. However, the four matters cited below are just some examples that reveal internal problems with this viewpoint.

New Creation Eschatology

In the past couple of decades, many theologians, including some prominent evangelical supersessionists, have come to embrace what I call *new creation eschatology*.¹⁷ New Creation Eschatology believes that the eternal state is not a heavenly, timeless, non-material reality but a new heavens and new earth. That's what Scripture says in passages like Isaiah 65, 2 Peter 3:13,

17. For the terminology of new creation eschatology in relation to what I call spiritual vision eschatology, see Craig A. Blaising, "Premillennialism," in *Three Views on the Millennium and Beyond*, ed. Darrell L. Bock (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 160–81. Some who have affirmed this type of eschatology include N. T. Wright, *Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church* (New York: HarperOne, 2008); *idem*, *New Heavens, New Earth: The Biblical Picture of the Christian Hope*, Grove Biblical Series B11 (Cambridge: Grove Books, 1999); Jurgen Moltmann, *The Coming of God: Christian Eschatology*, trans. Margret Kohl (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996); J. Richard Middleton, *A New Heaven and a New Earth: Reclaiming Biblical Eschatology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, forthcoming); Donald Gowan, *Eschatology in the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986); Douglas Moo, "Nature in the New Creation: New Testament Eschatology and the Environment," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 49 (2006): 449–88.



and Revelation 21 and 22. The dwelling place of the redeemed in that new creation is not in heaven but on the new earth. Again, that is consistent with prophecies in Isaiah and Revelation. This new earth, like the old earth, has geographical particularity, which also fits with prophecies in Isaiah and Revelation as well as a number of other texts in Scripture. In fact, the imagery of refinement extending from Isaiah to 2 Peter is a basis for believing that the new earth is not an utterly new creation from nothing but a refinement and renovation of the present earth.¹⁸ God's plan for his creation is not to destroy it and start over from nothing but to redeem, cleanse, and renew it. In light of this, it is clear that new creation eschatology envisions not a non-material eternity, but a redeemed earth and redeemed heavens fit for an everlasting (durate rather than static) glorious manifestation of the presence of God.

Now, given that the new earth has geographical particularity and that it is essentially this earth redeemed for an everlasting glory, is it not important to ask about the territorial promises to Israel? The land and nation promises to Israel were repeatedly stated to be everlasting. In Isaiah, the promise of the new earth is linked to the promise of a restored Jerusalem (Isaiah 65:18–25), the chief part of the land of promise. The blessings of the new earth parallel the promised blessings of the land of Israel in many texts so that the land becomes an example of what is intended for the whole earth.

Many supersessionist theologians have embraced new creation eschatology. N. T. Wright has celebrated his personal discovery of it and the change that has brought to his thinking.¹⁹ The material particularity of new creationism is especially appealing in addressing environmental and creation-care

18. Paul's words on the future glory of the present creation in Romans 8 also point the a renovation of the present creation rather than an annihilation and re-creation *de novo*.

19. N. T. Wright, *Surprised by Hope*.

concerns. However, Wright still finds no place in his eschatology for national and territorial Israel. For him, as for many others, the nation and the land become entirely “Christified.”²⁰ Are these views consistent or coherent? So, let’s just imagine traversing the new earth, crossing its various and particular geographical features, and coming to the Middle East. What do we find there? A void? A spatial anomaly? But then, where would the New Jerusalem be? Maintaining new creation eschatology while arguing that the territory of Israel has been spiritualized or “Christified” is not a consistent or coherent view.

Interconnection of Covenant Promises

Supersessionists typically affirm the progression argued in the book of Hebrews from the Old Covenant to the New Covenant. But they read this progression as an abandonment of God’s particular national and territorial promises to Israel. However, Hebrews explicitly quotes the Jeremiah 31 prophecy of the new covenant as a covenant that the Lord “will establish . . . with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah” (Heb. 8:8). The implication of the last declaration quoted in Hebrews 8:12: “I will forgive *their* [Israel and Judah in context] iniquity and remember *their* sin no more” is explained in Jeremiah 31:35–37: Israel will be a nation forever before the Lord! It is not consistent or coherent to affirm the fulfillment of new covenant promises while denying a national future for Israel. The national and territorial promise to Israel is a constituent feature of covenant promise from Abraham

20. A redefinition of Israel lies at the heart of Wright’s literary project. See for example, N. T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 29, 61–62, 240, 250; *idem*, *The New Testament and the People of God*, Christian Origins and the Question of God, Vol. 1 (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 457–58; *idem*, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, Christian Origins and the Question of God, vol. 2 (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 446, 471.



to the new covenant prophesied by Jeremiah. There is no reason to exclude it from “the world to come” expected by the writer of Hebrews (Heb. 2:5). To include it would be the most consistent and coherent reading of that book together with the rest of the canon of Scripture.

False Hermeneutical Dichotomy

As noted earlier, a key assumption of many supersessionist readings of Scripture is a dichotomy between the particular and universal in the plan of God. The universal must replace the particular. Really? Is a whole a *replacement* of a part—such that the part disappears and its place is taken by a whole? Is that coherent? What is a whole if it is not the total collection of parts? The part *must* be present and remain for a whole to be complete. The universal does not replace the particular in the story of the Bible. Rather the story of the Bible encompasses an interaction among parts, individuals and nations, until a whole with all its constitutive parts is completed. This is why Romans 11 is so important for understanding the main story line of the canonical narrative.

Theological Consistency and Coherence

Briefly, let us return to an implication of the discussion of performative language above. By virtue of the performative nature of a promise (not to mention the additional conventions which underscore its resolve), to argue that the Lord “Christifies,” spiritualizes, or revises *so as to essentially discard* the national and territorial promises to Israel in the fulfillment of the plot line of Scripture is to call into question the integrity of God. It is particularly inconsistent for Evangelical theologians, who affirm

the inerrancy of Scripture, to make such claims. Typically, the doctrine of inerrancy is rooted in the integrity of God which extends to the integrity of His Word. How can His word in general be considered trustworthy if in its most paradigmatic trust-engendering form it is found untrustworthy? But even more, failure here extends to the very being of God as revealed by His Name. Ezekiel 37:26–28 and 39:25–29 speak of the resolution of the theological problem of Israel’s exile from the land, a problem repeatedly voiced in Ezekiel. God’s Name, God’s very character as God, is tied to the fulfillment of His covenant promises to Israel. The constitution of Israel as a nation among the nations in the eschatological kingdom is coordinate with true theology (“*they will know that I Am the Lord,*” Ezek. 39:28). To factor national and territorial Israel out will not produce a coherent theology—certainly not the theology that was prophesied in Scripture.

HERMENEUTICAL IMPORTANCE OF A HOLISTIC ESCHATOLOGY

In conclusion, how one perceives the end of a story will affect one’s estimate of the story as a whole—the significance of its various parts and their relevance in the story line. Supersessionism, the belief that Israel has been replaced, or redefined, in the story line of the Bible, is first of all an eschatological view—one in which there is no place for *Israel* as it was created, defined, and made the object of everlasting promises in Scripture. This necessarily impacts how one estimates various elements of the biblical story line not just as narrative but in terms of their ultimate theological importance. I do not think that it is a coincidence that the excision (considered by some to be a *revision*) of Israel from



eschatological fulfillment is often coordinate with a reduction of theological concern regarding earthly, material realities. But it also impacts many areas of theology, such as Christology, ecclesiology, anthropology, even theology proper.²¹ In contrast to supersessionism, I would recommend a *holistic eschatology* in which “all the promises of God find their Yes in Christ” (2 Cor 1:20). This includes promises regarding Israel. And, it extends to promises regarding the nations. It includes God’s plans and purpose for the earth as well as the heavens. It envisions human beings not only as individuals but in their various corporate connections from their ethnic identities to their political and social organizations. In a holistic eschatology, the kingdom of God is a robust rather than thin concept. And, the person of Christ, rather than being a mystical reductive principle, as in notions of “Christification,” is seen instead in the full reality of his holistic kingdom, bringing to completion the rich fullness of an inheritance that has been planned, promised, and proclaimed throughout the amazing story of Scripture.

Study Questions

1. How can we know when to interpret a text literally or figuratively?
2. Give some examples of misinterpretation from everyday life. Can you identify the problem in each example?
3. When is allegory a legitimate—or an illegitimate—method of interpretation?

21. Craig A. Blasing, “The Future of Israel as a Theological Question,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* (2001): 435–50, republished in *To the Jew First: A Case for Jewish Evangelism in Scripture and History*, ed. Darrell L. Bock and Mitch Glaser (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2008), 102–21.

4. List the categories, principles, and methods that characterize evangelical biblical interpretation today. Can you detect a movement from individual words to larger levels of context in these methods?
5. How do supersessionists read the movement from promise to fulfillment in the biblical story?
6. Explain briefly the four criteria for evaluating broad interpretative systems.
7. What must an interpretative system do to claim to be comprehensive? What are some texts that should not be ignored in considering how God's promises to Israel will be fulfilled?
8. How does performative language, or speech-act analysis help to evaluate the congruence of supersessionist and non-supersessionist approaches to Scripture?
9. What is a common mistake in reading the relation between God's purpose for Israel and God's purpose for all people in the movement from Old Testament to New Testament? How should that mistake be corrected?
10. What are some problems of consistency and coherence with supersessionist readings of Scripture? How does a holistic reading of Scripture answer these problems?



The Coming Kingdom and the Day of the Lord in Joel 2

Daniel Nessim

KEYWORDS

| Day of the Lord | Joel | Repentance | Locusts |
| Eschatology | Rebellion–Judgement |

ABSTRACT

The concept of the ‘Day of the Lord’ requires definition in regard to other ‘Days’ in the Hebrew Bible and has proven difficult for scholars to find an agreed approach to, let alone come to a consensus definition. The prophet Joel and its locust imagery provide a matrix for interpreting the term. The militarisation of the locust horde in Joel 2 compared to that of Joel 1 clarifies the author’s metaphorical intent. It also signals the actual, literal Day of the Lord that Joel wishes to signify. While eschatological in nature, this Day of the Lord can be averted by repentance. Thus Peter’s call for repentance in Acts 2, based on the text of Joel 2, can be seen to avert the Day of the Lord and its horrific judgment. In contrast the lack of repentance by the rebellious subjects of Revelation 9 leads to their judgement and the execution of the Day of the Lord upon them.



The death of the reformist Yorkshire MP William Wilberforce in 1833 along with a number of other ‘old leaders’ in Evangelicalism was a factor in a new, assertive tone for British Evangelicalism.¹ One facet of that new assertiveness was an increasing emphasis upon the literal and historical meaning of the Scriptures. This had significant implications as the ‘new’ method of interpretation linked the return of Christ to the salvation of the Jewish people and his subsequent millennial rule.² The new hermeneutic also required a reassessment of the *יוֹם ה'*,³ or the Day of the Lord (=DL). The DL, in Ladislav Černý’s view ‘the basic notion of eschatology’,⁴ and as Yair Hoffmann puts it ‘inseparable from the overall problem of Biblical Eschatology’⁵ is thus the subject of this paper. Joel 2 makes a particularly interesting study on account of the prophet Joel’s placement within the ‘Book of Twelve’ Minor Prophets; the general focus of Joel on the Day of the Lord; and the crucial role played by Joel 2 in describing that day. It is the purpose of this article, then, to evaluate Joel 2 from a historical and literary perspective to ascertain the author’s eschatological expectations.

1 David W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1989), 75ff.

2 Ibid., 88.

3 This paper represents the Tetragrammaton with *יה* in Hebrew and Y’ or J’ in English.

4 Ladislav Černý, *The Day of Y’ and Some Relevant Problems*, *Práce Z VědeckýCh Ústavů* (V Praze: University Karlovy, 1948), vii.

5 Yair Hoffmann, “The Day of the Lord as a Concept and a Term in the Prophetic Literature,” *ZAW* 93, no. 1 (1981): 37; See also Gerhard von Rad, *The Theology of Israel’s Prophetic Traditions*, trans. David Muir Gibson Stalker, 2 vols., vol. 2, *Old Testament Theology* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1965), 119.

THE ORIGIN OF THE DAY OF THE LORD

The origin of the phrase DL within the Hebrew Bible is a matter of ongoing interest. One viewpoint is that it originates in the concept of God's holy war. Another is that it is related to the occurrence of theophany. The two are in fact related. In 1958, while proposing that the DL was primarily related to God's 'final uprising against his foes'⁶, Gerhard von Rad began by noting that there 'is in fact something peculiar about the expectation of the Day of J', for wherever it occurs in prophecy, the statements culminate in an allusion to J's coming in person.⁷ This observation would also be echoed by Weiss who rejected von Rad's basic idea of 'an ancient "HW [Holy War] tradition"' and concluded from a survey of the relevant passages that the 'DL motif-complex... has its roots in the ancient motif-complex of the theophany-descriptions.'⁸ Based on his interpretation of the use of the term in texts that he takes to interpret past events, Joseph Everson concludes that the term 'Day of the Lord' 'is a concept that is used to interpret momentous events of war' and suggests that the prophets speak 'of the succession of momentous events as Days of Y'.⁹ The question thus arises as to whether the DL refers to a singular event, a series of events or a constellation of events.

6 *The Theology of Israel's Prophetic Traditions*, 2, 124.

7 *Ibid.*, 119.

8 Meir Weiss, "The Origin of the "Day of the Lord" — Reconsidered," *HUCA* 37(1966): 60. Hoffmann betrays a reluctance to accept the possibility that DOL requires an actual appearance of God. He writes that 'It is hard to believe that during the period of the classical prophets there still existed among the masses expectations of a real, concrete appearance of God, such as the one depicted in Ex 14 17-18.Hence what we mean by theophany is a special and exceptional intervention in the current stream of events, which could be defined as a miracle.' Hoffmann, "The Day of the Lord as a Concept and a Term in the Prophetic Literature," 44.

9 A. Joseph Everson, "The Days of Y'," *JBL* 93, no. 3 (1974): 336-37.



A key criterion for this discussion is the determination of which passages in particular should be considered part of the data by which to define the DL. While the precise term DL occurs 16 times in the prophets, related terms abound such as the Day of the Lord's sacrifice (יום זבח ה'), the Day of the Lord's vengeance (יום נקם ה'), the Lord has a Day (יום ל'), the Day of the Lord's wrath (יום עברת ה'), the Day of the Lord's anger (יום עף ה') and so forth.¹⁰

Daniella Ishai-Rosenboim questions the idea that study of the DL must begin with the 16 instances of the exact term, and takes the position that the above listed terms should be included. In her very title she asks 'Is יום ה' (the Day of the Lord) a Term in Biblical Language?'¹¹ and continues to argue that a 'term is one, specific and unchanged expression referring to one, specific and unchanged concept.'¹² On the basis of a grammatical analysis she concludes that the 'collocation' of the terms Day and Lord 'is not the key to the study of the concept called today 'The Day of the Lord''¹³ In fact, Ishai-Rosenboim views the DL as 'so amorphous, that it is unreasonable that it should become a term.'¹⁴ Thus a speaker's audience would only know what was meant by the DL by other clues in the speaker's address.

Ishai-Rosenboim's thesis is in response to Yair Hoffman who argued twenty five years previous that one must begin study of the concept of the DL with a study of the usage of the specific

10 Abraham Even-Shoshan, *A New Concordance of the Old Testament Using the Hebrew and Aramaic Text*, 2 ed. (Jerusalem: Kiryat Sefer, 1989), 455.

Isa 13:6, 9; Joel 1:15, 2:1, 11; 3:4; 4:14; Amos 5:18 (twice), 20; Obad 15; Zeph 1:7, 14 (twice), and Mal 3:23; Ishai-Rosenboim counts 16 occurrences, including Ezek 13:5; Daniella Ishai-Rosenboim, "Is יום ה' (the Day of the Lord) a Term in Biblical Language?," *Biblica* 87, no. 3 (2006): 398.

11 "Is יום ה' (the Day of the Lord) a Term in Biblical Language?."

12 Ibid., 395.

13 Ibid., 401.

14 Ibid., 400.

phrase. Therefore, ‘only after a careful philological examination of the proper phrase can one proceed to evaluate the significance of the related phrases.’¹⁵ Hoffman pointed out the contrast in methodology between those who examine the term and its usage in Scripture and those who do not, saying ‘Before we investigate the relationship between the phrase [יִום ה'] and the other phrases, it is necessary to make primary definition of DOL [=Day of the Lord] on the basis of those passages that specifically use this phrase. Some studies have not been conducted according to this method, and a recent one by A. J. Everson [1974] is a prime example of the opposite.’¹⁶

His approach was an attempt to provide a reasonable starting point for the study that would provide reliable results since previous studies had demonstrated to him the folly of casting one’s net so wide that the concept eludes definition.¹⁷ Both approaches show the difficulty in determining what the DL is and point towards the value of a closer look at the extended description of the DL in the key texts such as Joel 2.

The complexity of the discussion is reduced somewhat by the fact that, as Meir Weiss assures, ‘the DL does not figure in any form whatsoever, in extra-prophetic literature.’¹⁸ The closest to be found is a reference to a festival as ‘the day of god’ in an Assyrian text.¹⁹ In other words, the DL is a purely biblical term and the context in which it is used is limited to the prophetic corpus.

Within the prophets the earliest occurrence of the exact

15 Hoffmann, “The Day of the Lord as a Concept and a Term in the Prophetic Literature,” 38.

16 Ibid.

17 Ibid. Hoffman particularly singles the following article out as an example; Everson, “The Days of Y’.”

18 Weiss, “The Origin of the “Day of the Lord” — Reconsidered,” 41.

19 Černý, *The Day of Y’ and Some Relevant Problems*, 15.



phrase DL is generally taken to be in Amos. Hoffmann himself began his study of the term with Amos 5:18-20.²⁰ Yet even with this starting point there is a lack of consensus. Hans Walter Wolff in his commentary weighed in to judge that ‘vRad is, however, right in claiming “that Amos 5:18 is not sufficiently unequivocal to be used as a suitable starting-point for an examination; it is advisable to begin with texts which convey a more unequivocal, and at the same time a broader conception of the Day of Y”²¹ His point is well taken for Amos 5 raises the prospect of a DL that establishes justice, and far from being a war is in 5:18-20 a dark day to be apprehensive about. Amos does not describe the DL in detail other than to state the outcome that it will inaugurate. As Hoffman himself notes, ‘one may say as opposed to the *uncrystallized popular concept* regarding the appearance of God in an act of salvation ... Amos represents *another uncrystallized* approach: the appearance of God would be »darkness and not light«.²²

In all probability the DL will continue to present dilemmas and controversy for the foreseeable future. Further study of the key texts in which the phrase appears has much to commend it and it is on the strength of that that Joel becomes a prophet of interest.

THE PROPHET JOEL

Reading Joel involves numerous uncertainties. Among these, there is little certainty as to Joel’s identity. He is described as the son of Pethuel (1:1) which gives rise to various theories as

20 Hoffmann, “The Day of the Lord as a Concept and a Term in the Prophetic Literature,” 39.

21 Weiss, “The Origin of the “Day of the Lord” — Reconsidered,” 39.

22 Hoffmann, “The Day of the Lord as a Concept and a Term in the Prophetic Literature,” 42.

to his identity, none of which are secure.²³ Nevertheless these uncertainties are not decisive or essential in terms of interpreting the prophet's message. So it is that O. Palmer Robertson points out the silver lining of this cloudy picture, and suggests that the 'effect of this anonymity is to keep the reader's concentration focused on the message, not on the man.'²⁴

A related and further ambiguity is expressed in the wide range of opinion as to the book's date. Elie Assis has recently made a persuasive argument for its composition during the exile between 587 and 538.²⁵ The most obvious question regarding this dating is that there is limited evidence for a significant Jewish population in Israel during this time. While it is possible that 'the land of Judah continued to be populated after the exile' Assis has to acknowledge that it was 'very small and in a depressed state'.²⁶ Nevertheless, an exilic dating does seem possible, even likely, and so Assis' dating provides a good starting point.

In Hebrew counting, there are twelve Minor Prophets, and the second of these is Joel. The placement directly after Hosea is not accidental. Deist has identified significant affinities between Hosea 2 and Joel 2 in which similar imagery of agricultural devastation and subsequent blessing and restoration by the Lord are present.²⁷ Similarly Joel 2:1, 15 clearly echo Hosea 5:8, which

23 In his midrash on Joel, Rashi identified him in the earliest era, as the prophet Samuel's son 'בן שמואל הנביא שפיתה לחל בתפלתו'. Matis Roberts and Yitzchok Stavsky, *The Later Prophets: The Twelve Prophets* (New York: Mesorah Publications, 2014).

24 O. Palmer Robertson, *Prophet of the Coming Day of the Lord: The Message of Joel* (Durham: Evangelical Press, 1995), 22.

25 Elie Assis, "The Date and Meaning of the Book of Joel," VT 61, no. 2 (2011). The promise that God will 'restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem' (3:1) as well as the reference to his people 'scattered among the nations' (3:2) argue against a pre-exilic date. The observation that there is no reference to idolatry suggests an exilic or post-exilic date. Yet if Joel was written during the exile, a consequent question to be answered is how this prophecy could have been located in the Land and refer to the Temple cult.

26 Ibid., 180-81.

27 Ferdinand E. Deist, "Parallels and Reinterpretation in the Book of Joel: A



reads: ‘Blow the horn in Gibeah, the trumpet in Ramah. Sound the alarm at Beth-aven; we follow you, O Benjamin!’ As Richard Coggins argues, ‘It is surely right here to see a deliberate literary link’.²⁸ When Joel writes he is not confronting the idolatry that faced Hosea, neither are Gibeah and Ramah any more part of the Northern Kingdom fearing invasion from the south. Now Zion is the focus and Joel applies the imagery of a previous generation to his current situation.

The placement just before Amos is likewise appropriate. The two prophets also have substantial affinities. In both, Tyre, Philistia and Edom are singled out (Joel 3:4, 19; Amos 1:8-9), and in both, the ‘Lord roars from Zion’ (Joel 3:16; Amos 1:2). Both warn of devouring locusts (Joel 1:24; 2:25 and Amos 4:9; 7:1-3) and both issue a call for repentance (Joel 1:13, 2:12 and Amos 5:4-6, 14-15). For both the DL is darkness (Joel 2:2, Amos 5:18). Wolff suggests that, ‘in all likelihood those who arranged the collection of the Twelve wished us to read Amos and the following prophets in the light of Joel’s proclamation.’²⁹ If this is true, it momentarily signifies that Joel is the lens through which the other descriptions of the DL were intended to be read.

THE LOCUSTS OF JOEL

The book of Joel progresses in phases from its opening words ‘Hear this, you elders!’ The first chapter portrays four waves of

Theology of the Yom Y’?,” in *Text and Context: Old Testament and Semitic Studies for F.C. Fensham*, ed. W. Claassen, Jsotsup (Sheffield: JSOT, 1988), 70-71.

28 Richard James Coggins, *Joel and Amos*, ed. Ronald E. Clements, New Century Bible Commentary (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2000), 38. See also Jer 6:1.

29 Hans Walter Wolff, *A Commentary on the Books of the Prophets Joel and Amos*, trans. Hans Walter Wolff, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977), 3.

locusts devastating the Land, and subsequently calls the priests and elders to call the people to repentance in the face of this DL. Without identifying the locusts by name the second chapter repeats the picture of invasion and devastation in militaristic terms. This chapter also calls the people to repentance in the face of the DL (2:12-17) but progresses a step further. In 2:18-27 Joel promises the Lord's pity on the repentant inhabitants, once again mentioning the locusts by name. The third chapter (in English Bibles 2:28-32) does not mention the DL by name but introduces an apocalyptic depiction which persists to the end of the book and concludes 'The Lord dwells in Zion' (4:21). It is no surprise that with the careful arrangement of the book, its inter-textual references and parallels, that Ferdinand Deist concluded that Joel includes various 'theologies' of the DL which are 'arranged in such a manner that they may be read as reinterpretations of each other.'³⁰

In reading Joel, the reader is immediately faced with the need to identify the locust army being described. Pablo Andinach goes as far as to argue that, whenever the book of Joel was penned, its interpretation is 'dependent upon a decision about the identity of the locusts'.³¹ Are the locusts literal or figurative? Are the armies literal or eschatological? And what is the relationship between these different possibilities?

Various arguments have been marshalled against the idea that Joel writes of a literal plague of locusts. On the basis that Exodus 10:14 promised that there would never be a plague of locusts like that which was inflicted upon the Egyptians some ancient rabbis argued that they are not literal.³² Thus Cecil Roth

30 Deist, "Parallels and Reinterpretation in the Book of Joel: A Theology of the Yom Y'?", 75.

31 Pablo R. Andinach, "The Locusts in the Message of Joel," VT 42, no. 4 (1992): 433. John A. Thompson, "Joel's Locusts in the Light of near Eastern Parallels," JNES 14, no. 1 (1955).

32 Roberts and Stavsky, *The Later Prophets: The Twelve Prophets*, 117.



has argued that the ancient view was that the locusts represented far more than a literal plague, although unfortunately he does not provide his sources.³³ On the other hand, Joel's description of a locust army in chapter 1 is so graphic and detailed that it leaves little room for an alternative.³⁴ The description of four waves, or possibly types of locusts in 1:4, 2:25 draw upon what seems to be common knowledge between the author and his readers. This is not unlikely. Israeli entomologist F.S. Bodenheimer wrote in 1950 that 'At intervals of 11 to 13 years, huge swarms have invaded the country, in the late winter or early spring, for from one to four consecutive years.'³⁵ Specific consequences such as the physical damage to vines and fig trees (1:7) and the cancellation of grain and drink offerings 'from the house of the Lord' due to lack of produce (1:9) are indicative of an historical event. Joel consistently speaks of the locusts as a past event the effects of which were presently being experienced. There is no hint of military forces or destruction in the description of Joel 1.

The army of Joel 2 has various features in common with the locust horde of chapter 1, but also some unique characteristics. It seems that on the basis of the literal locust invasion in Joel 1, the prophet expanded his message to forewarn of a yet coming invasion. The problem facing interpreters is that Joel 2:2-11

33 'In the view of the covenanters of Qumran (and the same was to be the case with other pious interpreters later on), it was obviously inconceivable that the store of inspiration conveyed by the Prophet should be devoted to something so transitory and so trivial as a plague of locusts.' Cecil Roth, "The Teacher of Righteousness and the Prophecy of Joel," VT 13, no. 1 (1963): 93.

34 Commentators who take the locusts as literal include such as Charles Lee Feinberg, *The Minor Prophets* (Chicago: Moody, 1976), 74; Elie Assis, *The Book of Joel: A Prophet between Calamity and Hope*, ed. Claudia V. Camp and Andrew Mein, vol. 581, Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 34-35; Leslie C. Allen, *The Books of Joel, Obadiah, Jonah and Micah*, ed. R.K. Harrison, Nicot (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 49-51.

35 F. S. (Shimon Fritz) Bodenheimer, "Note on Invasions of Palestine by Rare Locusts," *Israel Exploration Journal* 1, no. 3 (1950): 146. Bodenheimer identifies three different species of locusts known to invade Palestine.

describes an army so closely after the pattern of the locust army in Joel 1 that it is common for commentators to take them as being the same army. On the other hand, as Feinberg has put it, there does indeed appear to be a ‘sinister reality behind the locust plague’.³⁶

THE LOCUST PLAGUE

In Joel 1:6 the locust army is described as a mighty (עצום) nation. In Joel 2 the same term (עצום) is used of the invaders no less than three times: in 2:2, 5 as a mighty people and in 2:11 as a mighty army. In the face of the invasion Joel 1:1 asks ‘has such a thing happened in your days or in the days of your fathers?’ whereas Joel 2:2 states ‘their like has never been before.’ In what forms the first part of an inclusio, Joel 1:4 describes the locusts with four of the ten different terms that are used of locusts in the Hebrew Bible.³⁷ In Joel 2:25 the inclusion is completed as the same four terms are repeated in the context of a reprise of Joel one’s agricultural imagery in the previous chapter.

Nevertheless, Joel also distinguishes the two armies. In chapter one the direction from which the locusts come is not mentioned, but his readers would have known that locusts typically invade from the south. In chapter two the army is described as coming from the north (2:20). This was the traditional direction from which foreign enemies were expected to invade the land (e.g. Jer 4:6, 6:1; Ezek 39:2).³⁸ While in chapter 1 the picture is that of four kinds of locusts, chapter 2:2 portrays a single army. Whereas

36 Allen, *The Books of Joel, Obadiah, Jonah and Micah*, 75; Feinberg, *The Minor Prophets*, thus writes ‘...the plague in its literal sense does not exhaust the intent of the Lord.’ 74.

37 Allen, *The Books of Joel, Obadiah, Jonah and Micah*, 64.

38 Brevard S. Childs, “The Enemy from the North and the Chaos Tradition,” *JBL* 78, no. 3 (1959).



chapter 1 compares the locusts to lions or lionesses which were native threats to the inhabitants of the land,³⁹ in military terminology chapter 2 compares the locusts to horses, cavalry, warriors and soldiers (2:5,7). In this he draws upon the literal visual comparison that can be made between the appearance of locusts and horses (apart from scale!). The comparison has been made in more cultures than just that of the prophet Joel. Feinberg makes the observation that just as the locusts are described like ‘horses’ in 2:4 so even in Italian (*cavaletta*) and German (*Haupferde*) there are terms for locusts derived from words for horses.⁴⁰

Thus the primarily *agricultural* image of Joel 1 gives way to a military one in Joel 2. In terms of what these armies do, no longer is the issue one of agricultural destruction with new wine being snatched from the lips (1:5), vines laid waste and fig trees debarked (1:7), or crop destruction and drought (1:10,12). Rather now in Joel 2 the portrayal is that of walls being scaled (2:7), the breaching of defenses (2:8), the scaling of city walls and infiltration of homes (2:9). Perhaps most frighteningly, whereas the first invasion is described as a *mighty* army Joel makes it clear that the army of Joel 2 is the *Lord’s* army that obeys his command (2:11). There is an intensification as well as a reidentification of the army’s significance.

Various features of Joel 2 therefore suggest that the prophet is warning of more than an approaching second invasion of locusts. In fact, Barton is so uncomfortable with the idea that Joel 2 might simply be referring to a further locust invasion that he wonders if 2:25, the latter part of our inclusio, ‘might be a later insertion.’⁴¹

39 Judges 14:5; 1 Sam 17:34-37.

40 Feinberg, *The Minor Prophets*, 76. See also C.J. (ed.) Ellicott, *A New Testament Commentary for English Readers, by Various Writers*, 3 vols., vol. 3 (London: Cassell, Petter, Galpin and Co., 1884), 576.

41 John Barton, *Joel and Obadiah: A Commentary, The Old Testament Library* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 90.

This is unsubstantiated, but serves to illustrate the tension and connection between the armies of Joel 1 and 2.

Such a comparison of locusts and armies is one found both within and without the Scriptures, suggesting the possibility that the simile was well known. Thus the invading Midianite hordes are described as ‘like locusts’ in Judges 6:5 and 7:12 as they and their camels devour everything the Israelites have. Also in the Ugaritic texts of *Keret* and *Anat* there is also an invading army, compared to a swarm of locusts. This army, ‘troops without number, soldiers uncountable’ is like locusts for ‘they occupy the field, like grasshoppers the corners of the desert.’⁴²

This is of interest, because in all such examples like in Judges and *Keret* and *Anat* the armies are said to be like locusts, but in Joel, the locusts are said to be an army. The effect is thus to draw the reader’s attention from the known to the fearsome unknown. In view of these similarities and differences I take the view that Joel’s readers would have understood that in the second chapter he was describing a coming military invasion in terms of the locust invasion they had just experienced. Is this then what the DL is all about?

THE DAY OF THE LORD IN JOEL 2

The term DL (יִּוֶם ה') occurs three times in Joel, each time in the context of a coming event. In Joel 1:15 the people have been enjoined to mourn in response to the agricultural disaster they are facing. It is a disaster that can only but remind them of the destructive DL which ‘is near’ (קָרִיב) and ‘will come’ (יָבוֹא). In

42 Deist, “Parallels and Reinterpretation in the Book of Joel: A Theology of the Yom Y’?,” 66, citing Krt 88-91, 103-05.



Joel 2:1 the DL is once again ‘coming’ (בא) and ‘near’ (קרוב). It is thus that Joel, with his call to ‘blow the trumpet (שופר) in Zion’ introduces two important pieces of information in his description of the DL.

The first is that of location: Zion, which is to be identified with the eastern ridge upon which Jerusalem was built and where the Temple stood.⁴³ There is a direct connection in Joel 2:1 between Zion and ‘my holy mountain’. This is the place where in the prophet’s day God was worshipped, even though it is highly likely that the Temple had not yet been rebuilt when Joel prophesied. The alarm being called for was on account of danger not just to the city of Jerusalem, but specifically this mountain where God was worshipped. The priesthood, who were as it was stakeholders in the events surrounding the DL, and are mentioned in 1:9, are thus put in context. It is clear (as might have been assumed) that their functions were performed on the Temple mount, still called the ‘house of the Lord’ despite their lack of the Solomonic structure. From this point on, in the words of James Crenshaw the ‘identity of the endangered city is made known’.⁴⁴ This locus is reaffirmed in 2:23; 3:5; 4:16, 17 and 21.

The second piece of information that Joel introduces in his description of the DL is regarding its nature. In 1:13 the prophet had not described the DL other than to say that it was ‘near’ and coming ‘as destruction from the Almighty’, the same two points that are made in Joel 2:1. From there he returned to a description of the devastation his readers had seen. Whereas the locust invasion of Joel 1 is a past event, the DL as described following Joel 2:1 is an ominously imminent and unremittingly dark prospect. It is something to tremble at. Here the wording is

43 Lewis Bayles Paton, “Jerusalem in Bible Times: V. Zion, Ophel, and Moriah,” *The Biblical World* 29, no. 5 (1907).

44 James L. Crenshaw, *Joel: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 24c, The Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 1995), 117.

identical to that of Zeph 1:14-16: 'a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness'. Not only is it terrifying in this respect, but it is also reminiscent of his predecessor Isaiah's description of the DL as 'destruction from the Almighty' (Isaiah 13:6) and 'cruel, with wrath and fierce anger' (13:9). It is this darkness Amos describes, disaster upon disaster as when a man flees from a lion only to meet a bear (5:18-20).

Joel continues in graphic terms, and his message is further clarified by what at first might seem to be mere poetry, but is revealed to be far more. As seen above, the prophet is now at pains to describe the DL in terms of the locusts that have so recently traumatised his readers. Again and again in 2:2-9 Joel describes the locusts as 'like' warriors, armies, or thieves and the effects of their activity as 'like' blackness, and 'like' fire. These locusts evidently must be distinguished from those in Joel 1. They have features that are neither merely agricultural nor military. Before them the 'earth quakes' and the 'heavens tremble' (2:10). As with the theme of darkness, Wolff associates this terminology with the theophany accounts of the 'Sinai tradition'.⁴⁵ On Sinai the Lord's presence was accompanied by smoke 'and the whole mountain trembled greatly'. (Ex 19:18). It is a sign of the presence of the Lord, and in keeping with that, just as at Sinai (Ex 19:19), the voice of the Lord is heard in the subsequent verse. It is a sign that the Lord is present in the midst of the army being described.

It is the presence of the Lord in the midst of all of this that lifts the events being portrayed out of the ordinary world of agricultural and military disasters. Thus von Rad was right to point out that Joel 2:2-11 describes the locust army in dramatic terms and 'equates the locusts with the armies of the Day of J' marching into battle,' enabling Joel 'to draw on the whole range

45 Wolff, *A Commentary on the Books of the Prophets Joel and Amos*, 47.



of war concepts connected with the Day of J'.⁴⁶ This is what leads Barton to also argue that 'the problem envisaged in chapter 2 is not a locust plague but an enemy army, and not just any army but an "apocalyptic army"'.⁴⁷ In the face of this army, Joel emphasises that the DL is 'great' and 'very awesome'; so much so that the question has to be asked in advance: 'who can endure it?' (2:11).

JOEL'S APPEAL TO RETURN (שוב)

In the first chapter Joel had called upon the priests and ministers to put on sackcloth and mourn before God (1:13) on the basis of the locust invasion.⁴⁸ The priests were to declare a fast and sacred assembly (עצרה); summon the elders and the people to the House of the Lord; and cry out to the Lord (1:14). In some ways then the priests had a liturgical as well as a leadership function, leading the people of Israel in approaching God. This is a thread running through both chapter 1 and 2 as in both priests and sacrifice are mentioned (1:9,13; 2:17). Yet as James Linville points out, it is not the priests who are the centre of attention. In fact 'Joel employs a strategy which allows for the priests to be all but taken for granted'.⁴⁹ The focus is on an appeal to God by all sectors of society – the religious leadership, civil leadership

46 Rad, *The Theology of Israel's Prophetic Traditions*, 2, 121.

47 Barton, *Joel and Obadiah: A Commentary*, 69; See also Marvin A. Sweeney, *The Twelve Prophets*, ed. David W. Cotter, Berit Olam: *Studies in Hebrew Narrative and Poetry* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2000), 162.

48 Allen, *The Books of Joel, Obadiah, Jonah and Micah*, takes the 'ministers' to be the priests, its use in apposition to 'priests' being 'characteristic of postexilic writings', 53n.

49 James R. Linville, "The Day of Y' and the Mourning of the Priests in Joel," in *The Priests in the Prophets: The Portrayal of Priests, Prophets and Other Religious Specialists in the Latter Prophets*, ed. Lester L. Grabbe and Alice Ogden Bellis, Jsotsup (London: T&T Clark, 2004), 99.

(elders), and the people.⁵⁰ All are enjoined to turn to God in the midst of their distress.

Unlike the pre-exilic prophets, Joel's focus is not on the sins of the people. The locust horde of chapter 1 is not used as proof of divine judgment (although this could be considered to be implicit, with a possible hint of this to be found in 1:13 where the prophet writes of 'my God' versus 'your God').⁵¹ The tone is not one of denunciation. Rather, the focus of Joel's appeal is the DL. In Joel 1, after calling for all the deeds of lamentation, he clarifies that rather than the current or past locust plague, the reason to lament is that 'the day of the Lord is near' (1:15). In the face of all the current devastation, it is to the Lord that the prophet calls (1:19). As fits Assis' dating of Joel during the exile, it seems that the prophet is addressing an already chastised and humbled people and does not need to catalogue the sins for which they are already suffering.

Thus it is that when the reader of Joel 2:13 is faced with the imperative 'return (שוב) to me with all your heart' that the verb 'שוב' should be taken as a call to 'a renewed and heightened devotion to the deity'. As Linville saliently points out 'Joel's silence on the people's sins must not be drowned out by importing into its word-world the emphasis on guilt found in other literature and having this dominate our thinking about the book.'⁵² Here is an opportunity for the people to avert the decree (2:14). The hearkening back to the theophany on Mount Sinai is continued with a description of God's character in accord with the 'thirteen attributes of mercy' revealed to Moses in Ex 34:6-7, the memorable phrase 'merciful and gracious' (רחום וְתַנּוּן) reversed in order and rendered by Joel as 'gracious and merciful' (תַּנּוּן וְרַחוּם).

50 The lack of nobles and a monarchy in Joel is another sign of its composition during the exilic period.

51 Feinberg, *The Minor Prophets*, 74.

52 Linville, "The Day of Y' and the Mourning of the Priests in Joel," 101.



Demonstrating a common human motivation to pray for relief in the face of locust plagues, Victor Hurowitz has observed that the language of Joel regarding locusts is strikingly similar to a ‘text from Nineveh (K 3600 + DT 75) containing a partially preserved hymn to the goddess Nanaya concluding with a prayer on behalf of Sargon II, king of Assyria (721-705 BCE)’.⁵³ There one reads ‘The evil locust which destroys the crop/grain.... may by your command it be turned to nothing.’⁵⁴ Hurowitz continues to observe that the literary similarities between Joel 1:4-20 and the hymn point to either a dependency of one upon the other or a reliance upon ‘common traditional language’.⁵⁵

Joel, however, has taken the metaphor of a locust plague out of the ordinary and into the numinous. He is not just concerned about locusts. The picture of repentance and God’s ensuing mercy is appropriate enough to a locust army, but elements of it point to a future reality beyond any imminent invasion. Thus in contrast to some more contemporary translations, when Joel describes the Lord’s response to his people’s prayer in 2:18 the word ‘jealous’ or ‘zealous’ (נָקַד) should be translated as a future tense just as it is conjugated in the Hebrew, looking forward to a future time in accordance with the whole passage it introduces.⁵⁶ Present and future are conflated in his prophecy, and rather than that being a confusing matter, it is a tool of the prophet to bring the immanency of a future event to light for his readers.

53 Victor Avigdor Hurowitz, “Joel’s Locust Plague in Light of Sargon II’s Hymn to Nanaya,” *JBL* 112, no. 4 (1993): 598.

54 Ibid.

55 Ibid., 603.

56 Some render the mood as jussive: ‘May the Lord be jealous...’ Assis suggests Joel is portraying the Lord’s response to the people’s prayer. *The Book of Joel: A Prophet between Calamity and Hope*, 581, 164.

THE COMING DAY

Is the DL an eschatological event? Marco Treves found ‘nothing eschatological in the book of Joel’.⁵⁷ Relegating it to the fourth century BCE via eighteen dubious arguments he dated it to the days of the Ptolemy Soter and thus merely useful as a historical document.⁵⁸ This minimalist approach has little to commend it in reality, and jars with the book’s intertextual relationship to the other prophets and the general assessment of not only Christian but Jewish scholarship.⁵⁹ Elie Assis has carefully and effectively countered most of Treves’ eighteen arguments.⁶⁰

It may well be that Joel 2:10 (also 4:14 / 3:15) does not refer to the ultimate end of the universe as both Wolff and Weiss have estimated.⁶¹ Eschatology must be distinguished from Apocalyptic.

If that were so, why the call for repentance in order to avert the decree, and why the promise to restore the years that the ‘locust has eaten’ (2:25)? The context of Joel 2, the entire book and the DL in the Book of the Twelve Prophets would not suggest that. Joel uses poetic language, but this does not allow one to avoid the eschatological force of his arguments.

In Joel 2:10 the prophet declares ‘The earth quakes before them; the heavens tremble. The sun and the moon are darkened, and the stars withdraw their shining.’ His language clearly hearkens back to that of Amos 5:18 with its description of the DL as ‘darkness, and not light.’ Regardless of how literally these

57 Marco Treves, “The Date of Joel,” *VT* 7, no. 2 (1957): 150.

58 *Ibid.*, 156.

59 In rabbinic literature, Joel is dated between Ahab, king of Israel and Manasseh king of Judah (i.e. c. 870-640 BCE). Roberts and Stavsky, *The Later Prophets: The Twelve Prophets*, 116.

60 Assis, “The Date and Meaning of the Book of Joel.”

61 Weiss, “The Origin of the “Day of the Lord” — Reconsidered,” 59; Wolff, *A Commentary on the Books of the Prophets Joel and Amos*.



phenomena are to be taken, the point is that the DL is coming, and it is a Day when he ‘executes his word’ (2:11). Joel is portraying a literal, future event.

Joel expects that Judah will experience the DL in some way. The good news for Joel’s readers is that, as Barton puts it, ‘The “day of Y” “ predicted in chapter 2, just like that in chapter 1, is an occasion when Y’ judges the people decisively; but beyond it lies the possibility of a restoration of the normal conditions of life, with sacrifices restored to the Temple (2:14), the locust plague removed (2:20), and the effects of the devastation made good in the future.’⁶² Thus the Lord promises that he will ‘restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten’ (2:25). Joel 2, which began with the call of the trumpet thus ends with a promise (2:26), ‘And my people shall never again be put to shame.’ It is yet an unfulfilled promise to the inhabitants of the land. It is also an important promise, for just as Joel has repeated the call to ‘blow the trumpet in Zion’ (2:1, 15), and repeated his warning about the DL (2:1,11), so he now repeats the phrase verbatim in 2:27: ‘And my people shall never again be put to shame.’⁶³ The trumpet has been blown in Zion, and the children of Zion can rejoice (2:23).

THE DAY OF THE LORD IN ACTS AND REVELATION

As we have seen, Joel spoke of both a future eschatological DL and made a call for repentance. Almost 600 years after the

⁶² Barton, *Joel and Obadiah: A Commentary*, 70.

⁶³ John Strazicich, *Joel’s Use of Scripture and the Scripture’s Use of Joel: Appropriation and Resignification in Second Temple Judaism and Early Christianity*, ed. R. Alan Culpepper and Ellen van Wolde, Biblical Interpretation Series (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 200. Strazicich notes that ‘Both Dahmen and Crenshaw suggest that Joel’s allusion to the Scham statement stems from Deutero-Isaiah (Isa 45:17b:....’

prophet Joel, Peter proclaimed that Joel's DL had arrived (Acts 2:17-21). Taking his cue from the fact that his companions were filled with the Holy Spirit and speaking in other languages (Acts 2:4), Peter associated that with Joel 3:1-2, which twice states 'I will pour out my Spirit'. The connection led Peter to conclude that this was a sign of the DL. He was assisted in making the connection by his understanding of the significance of his location in Jerusalem. Thus he addressed the 'Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem' (Acts 2:14). This echoed Joel's location – 'Blow the trumpet in Zion' (Joel 2:1,15) and 'in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those who escape' (Joel 3:5). Presumably understanding the figurative nature of Joel's reference to the DL as 'darkness and not light' Peter was able to confirm that the day had come when the Lord would 'show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below' (Acts 2:19 = Joel 2:4).

Peter's audience was not going to see military deliverance, though that may be what they hoped for. After all, his sermon was delivered to devout Jewish audience,⁶⁴ who were acutely aware of Israel's indignities under an oppressive Roman regime. It is doubtful that they failed to infer what could not be explicitly preached – that the Roman legions were to be likened to the locust armies of Joel. They, as the locusts, were exemplars of the judgment of God. When Peter reminded them that 'everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved (Acts 2:21 = Joel 3:5) it is reasonable to say that the salvation envisaged by his audience was tinged by expectations of deliverance from a military foe.⁶⁵ In other words, they were hoping for the DL to

64 These are represented in Acts as residents of Jerusalem and Judea but their geographical origins suggests that their number also includes pilgrims on account of the festival, one of the *שלוש רגלים*, the three annual festivals when Jews congregated in Jerusalem.

65 Gary Gilbert, "The List of Nations in Acts 2: Roman Propaganda and the Lukan Response," *JBL* 121, no. 3 (2002). has shown that 'Acts has adapted the



arrive in its fullness in the imminent future.

The thrust of Joel's message, that the DL calls for *שובה*, repentance, came through clearly. Just as Joel used the DL as a pretext to call for repentance, so Peter called for repentance on the same basis (Acts 2:21 = Joel 3:5) and appealed for them to do the same (Acts 2:38). Peter interpreted Joel's message for them, related it to what they were observing in the hearing of various languages, and connected that to the recent events of Jesus' death and resurrection. It is this context which helps to explain his hearer's reaction to his message and the outcome that they were 'cut to the heart' (Acts 2:37). Military deliverance would remain to be fulfilled, as would the fulfilment of the prophet's twice repeated words 'And my people shall never again be put to shame' (2:26-27), but for the present, repentance was the appropriate response.

One cannot conclude without taking into account the locust army described in Rev 9:7-11. The portrayal there is even more alarming than that of Joel. In John's account the locusts are:

In appearance... like horses prepared for battle: on their heads were what looked like crowns of gold; their faces were like human faces, their hair like women's hair, and their teeth like lions' teeth; they had breastplates like breastplates of iron, and the noise of their wings was like the noise of many chariots with horses rushing into battle. They have tails and stings like scorpions, and their power to hurt people for five months is in their tails. They have as king over them the angel of the bottomless pit. His name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in Greek he is called Apollyon. (ESV)

Significant similarities can be seen between these locusts and those of the book of Joel, but also key differences.⁶⁶ Firstly as

well-known form of Roman propaganda in order to create a map of contested terrain and reinforce the claim that all the nations of the earth now rest under the dominion not of Caesar but of God and his son, Jesus.' p. 529.

66 Robert H. Gundry, *Commentary on the New Testament: Verse-by-Verse*

has been seen, Joel's military image of locusts is far from unique either in the Scripture or in contemporary literature. This is the imagery that John uses in Revelation, but as Joseph Mangina puts it 'In John's vision this image is taken up and transformed into something even more awful'.⁶⁷ Secondly, unlike Joel's locusts who are the Lord's army, these locusts have a king who comes from the bottomless pit. In Revelation the Lamb does precipitate the advent of the locust army as he opens the seals (Rev 8:1), but this does not correlate clearly enough with Joel's forthright identification of the locusts as specifically the Lord's army. Thus the case for a direct identification of the locusts in Joel and Revelation is not entirely clear-cut.

A key similarity cannot be passed by however. Just as Joel did, John informs us that the appropriate response to this locust army should be repentance. Despite the fact that Rev 9 depicts a day of the judgement, a DL, Rev 9:20 notes that in this instance such repentance does not come. Thus judgement proceeds unrelentingly. Revelation backs up the message of Acts 2 and that of Joel. Future judgement can be averted by a repentant response. In this respect the DL is both coming and yet demanding immediate repentance in each of these three cases. Repentance can 'avert the decree' in the words of the Jewish Day of Atonement liturgy. It can bring restoration of the 'years that the locust has eaten' in the words of Joel. But for those who do not repent the DL remains a future gloomy and dark prospect. Thus there is still a future aspect to the DL and prophetic aspects of the DL and the locust army in Joel 2 remain to be fulfilled.

Explanations with a Literal Translation (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2010), identifies the locusts with demons and draws strong parallels to the locusts of Joel, pp. 2014-26.

⁶⁷ Joseph L. Mangina, *Revelation* (London: SCM, 2010), 122.



CONCLUSION

Joel is very much a tapestry, and in Craig Blaising's words presents an 'aggregate' view of the DL.⁶⁸ This survey of Joel and in particular Joel 2 shows the need for a literal, historical and grammatical foundation in the interpretation of his prophecy. It is this 'literal' approach that inexorably draws us to an understanding of what will be 'literal' eschatological events, rooted in the past and coming to fruit in the future.

Joel issued a message to repent for the DL was near. Both John the Baptist and Jesus called for repentance for the Kingdom of Heaven is near (Matt 3:2, 4:17). In this respect Joel's message has a timeless quality and may be considered to speak even today in the face of environmental, geopolitical and military disasters.



68 Craig A. Blaising, "The Day of the Lord," Dallas Theological Seminary, http://www.dts.edu/media/play/the-day-of-the-lord-blaising-craig-a/?adsouce=TUBE_chapel.

Thy Kingdom Come

Derek Tidball

KEYWORDS

| Kingdom of God | Prayer | Inaugurated | Present |
| Future | Fulfilment | Apocalyptic | The End

ABSTRACT

Starting with the prayer, ‘Your kingdom come’, this paper introduces the sources of the idea of the Kingdom of God which was central to the person, mission and teaching of Jesus. After some preliminary general comments about the Kingdom of God in the New Testament, the teaching of Jesus about its present and future dimensions are reviewed before the latter is more fully explored. Paul’s teaching on the coming kingdom is then surveyed and finally the perspective of apocalyptic is introduced. A brief discursive mentions the relationship between the kingdom and the cross. The paper concludes by referring to the implications of praying, ‘Your kingdom come’.



INTRODUCTION

When Jesus taught his disciples to pray ‘Your kingdom come’ he was doing nothing new. And yet, at the same time he was doing everything new.

The Lord’s Prayer is closely patterned on the Jewish Prayer, the Kaddish, an Aramaic prayer regularly used at the close of synagogue worship and with which Jesus would have been familiar as a child. It began:

Exalted and hallowed by his great name
In the world which he created according to his will.
May he let his kingdom rule
in your lifetime and in your days and in the lifetime of
the whole house of Israel, speedily and soon.
Praise be his great name from eternity to eternity
And to this say: Amen.¹

As Jeremias, whose translation this is, says, ‘The Kaddish is an eschatological prayer. ...the ...end in view [is] God’s appearance as Lord’.² Either side of the petition, ‘your kingdom come’ or, in other words, ‘let his kingdom rule’, in the Lord’s prayer are the inseparable responses of homage ‘hallowed be your name’ and obedience, ‘your will be done’. This is why I say that from one viewpoint Jesus was doing nothing new. Jesus stands in continuity with Israel.

Two things, however, are new and suggest a measure of discontinuity. One, which does not concern us here, is the addition of the ‘we’ petitions in the Lord’s Prayer, which are not found in the Kaddish. The second, which does concern us, is

1 Translation of Joachim Jeremias, *New Testament Theology*, 1, trans. John Bowden, (London: SCM, 1971) p. 198. Cited by R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, NICNT, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 2007, p. 243.

2 Jeremias, p 198.

the meaning invested in the phrase ‘your kingdom come’. Those in the synagogue were, to quote Jeremias, ‘still completely in the courts of waiting’³ – anticipating the coming rule of God as entirely future, to happen at the end of the age. Jesus’ disciples, however, were increasingly to realise that this prayer was already in the process of being fulfilled, since the kingdom had already broken in to the present world. The breath-taking newness was to affirm that with his coming, in his own person, God’s kingdom was being established in territory where Satan reigned through deception and evil currently seemed to triumph. When Jesus preached, he signalled that the revolution had begun. God was once more taking control of his world, a world that had for a time tragically and quite illegitimately come to be controlled by ‘the dominion of darkness’ (Col. 1:13).

Such blunt contrasts, however, need some qualifying.

1. WHERE DID THE IDEA OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD COME FROM?

The exact phrase is not found in the OT but it is introduced in the gospels as something that was already familiar. The OT background is complex⁴ but four OT streams might be said to flow into the river that make up the NT concept of the kingdom of God.

(a) First, there is *the eternal fact*, as France has called it, that God was king.⁵ Ps 95:3 speaks for many other texts in proclaiming, ‘For the Lord is a great God, the great King

3 Jeremias, p. 199.

4 See Bruce Waltke, ‘The Kingdom of God in the Old Testament: Definitions and Story’ in Christopher Morgan and Robert Peterson (eds.), *The Kingdom of God*, Wheaton: Crossway, 2012, pp. 49-71.

5 R. T. France, ‘Kingdom of God’ in *DTIB*, p. 420.



above all gods'. The Psalms are not alone in acknowledging God as king, in looking to his throne and celebrating his reign, both present and future.

(b) Secondly, there is *the covenant agreement* that clearly established God as Israel's sovereign, which inherently points to the idea of the kingdom, or reign, of God. As the Lord their God he promised a multitude of blessings, providing they exclusively worshipped and wholeheartedly obeyed him. That is why the eventual quest for a human king was seen as a rejection of God as their king (1 Sam. 8:7). These covenants were imperfect in their operation and so the prophets looked forward to the coming of a new covenant, envisaged in Jeremiah 31 and Ezekiel 34, which is fulfilled in Jesus.⁶

(c) Thirdly, *the political reality* of Israel's history was a further source that flowed into the concept of the kingdom of God. Positively, this is seen in the kingdom of David and Solomon, the golden or ideal age of peace and prosperity. Negatively, the OT frequently uses the phrase 'kingdoms of the earth', by way of contrast to the 'kingdom of God' even if it does not use the phrase. These kingdoms are seen to be in increasingly sharp conflict with God's rule. This theme comes to a head in Daniel who puts the tribulations of the people of God at the hands of powerful rulers and earthly empires into perspective. Those kingdoms would come and go but 'His dominion is an eternal dominion; his kingdom endures from generation to generation' (Dan. 4:34-35). A primary role in the revealing of that kingdom was assigned to 'one like a son of man' who was granted by the Ancient of Days, 'authority, glory and sovereign power' Of him, Daniel says, 'all nations and people of every language worshipped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed' (Dan. 7:13-14).

(d) To these streams, we must add that of a developing

6 See further, Waltke, 'The Kingdom of God in the Old Testament: The Covenants,' in Morgan and Peterson (eds.), pp. 73-93.

messianic expectation. When the hope of Israel did not seem to be realised in their own experience, and human rebellion against God seemed to maintain the upper hand, they increasingly looked into the future for the day when God would defeat their enemies and reign more completely. We could look to Daniel's visions as seminal texts here, or to Is. 45:23. But let Zechariah speak for others as he envisages the coming day of the Lord, when 'The Lord will be king over all the whole earth. On that day there will be one Lord, and his name the only name' (Zech 14:9).

Israel strongly believed that God was king *de jure* (of right) but prayed for the day when he would also be king *de facto* (in fact, or in reality).

So, the idea was in the air during the time of Jesus. And we should not be surprised when Mark, without feeling the need to explain further, says, for example, that 'Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent member of the Council, was ... waiting for the kingdom of God (Mk 15:43).

2. WHAT IS THE KINGDOM OF GOD?

We must ask more fully what the NT means in using the phrase 'the kingdom of God' which it does, if we include some variations, like kingdom of heaven – which I take to be a respectful Jewish way Matthew adopts to avoid using the divine name – on over 100 occasions, with at least 76 sayings in the Gospels.⁷

⁷ Statistics all depend on how things are counted. Graeme Goldsworthy says, 'There are about 100 references to the kingdom of God/heaven in the Synoptic', three in John, six in Acts and eight in Paul. ('Kingdom of God' in *NDBT*, p. 615). The figure of 76 sayings in the Synoptics is calculated by Chris Caragounis in 'Kingdom of God/Heaven' in *DJG*, p. 425.



(a) It is the Kingdom of God.

We must emphasise, as Dick France has done in his writings on this topic, that it is overwhelmingly spoken of as the kingdom of God, not the kingdom. Acts 20:25 is the solitary exception, if you exclude some references in Matthew where adding ‘of heaven’ is made redundant by the context. It is about God being king. The emphasis is on God and to reduce it to ‘the kingdom’ puts the emphasis in the wrong place.⁸ It is about God’s dynamic rule, not a place, a land, or a territory (like the United Kingdom). Unless we do this we hijack the term to our own ends, as has often been done and apply it to human programmes or enterprises of one sort or another. So, the word ‘kingdom’ has been purloined to apply to a social gospel, to particular social programmes especially in terms of poverty, to feel-good therapies, or, at the other end of the spectrum, it has been appropriated to apply exclusively to charismatic experience and signs and wonders. It has also been expropriated to further the cause of businesses, so we can have our haircut at ‘Kingdom Hairdressers’, or bank at a ‘Kingdom Bank’, where money is, we hope, miraculously multiplied as were the loaves and fish, or we can enjoy an opulent kingdom life-style where nothing is too good for the sons and daughters of the king. The good news of the kingdom of God is that ‘God rules’.⁹

*(b) The kingdom of God is inextricably bound up
with the person of Jesus.*

Mark 1:15, Jesus’ first public pronouncement says, ‘The time has come. The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and

8 E.g., R. T. France, *Divine Government: God’s Kingship in the Gospel of Mark*, London: SPCK, 1990, pp. 12-13.

9 *Ibid.*, pp. 8-25.

believe the good news!’ The word *engiken* may either mean ‘fast approaching’ or ‘has arrived’.¹⁰ Tom Wright’s translation prefers ‘is arriving’,¹¹ but others more confidently assert it is a declaration of what has already happened. The arrival of the kingdom coincides with the arrival of Jesus. With his coming, the revolution has begun and God is reclaiming a world that for too long has looked to Satan as its ruler rather than to him.

(c) The kingdom is a present, if an unimagined, reality.

Jesus presents himself as the fulfilment of OT prophecies, like those of Isaiah 61:1-2 (Lk. 4:21) and Is 35:5-6 (Mt. 11:2-6), which look forward to the coming of the new age when God will defeat evil in all the varied forms it manifests itself, including the evils of sin, disease, barrenness and disability. His miracles and his exorcisms were, as John calls them, ‘signs’ of the kingdom. Here is God’s ‘saving sovereignty’ at work in the totality of Jesus’ life, death and resurrection.¹² The signs demonstrated what it would be like to live in a kingdom where God truly ruled. In Tom Wright’s words,

The whole point of what Jesus was up to was that he was doing, close up, in the present, what he was promising long-term, in the future. And what he was promising in the future, and doing in that present, was not about saving souls for a disembodied eternity, but rescuing people from the corruption and decay of the way the world presently is so that they could enjoy, already in the present, the renewal of creation which is God’s ultimate purpose...¹³

10 *Ibid.*, p 24.

11 Tom Wright, *The New Testament for Everyone*, London, SPCK, 2011.

12 G. R. Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Kingdom of God*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986, p. 339.

13 Tom Wright, *Surprised by Hope*, London: SPCK, 2007, p. 204.



When challenged about ‘when the kingdom of God would come’, Jesus replied that it was already ‘in your midst’ (Lk. 17:21).

The presence of the kingdom meant Jesus could speak of ‘entering it’ in the here and now, that is of voluntarily placing oneself under the rule of the king. Such a step was no light step and required commitment (Mk. 9:47), humility (Mk. 10:13-15), poverty of spirit (Mk 10:23). It also meant adopting the lifestyle of God’s kingdom, as set out in the Sermon on the Mount (Mt. 5-7). It was a kingdom where the last people you’d expect, the disreputable and unclean, would find a home (Mt. 20:16; Lk. 5:31-32; 14:15-24) that is, ‘the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame’, the very ones excluded in the Qumran rules as ineligible to sit at the table of the Messianic banquet, because of their disabilities which rendered them unclean.

Impressive though these signs were, they were only partial. And impressive as the invitation to enter was, it was only anticipatory on a fuller experience to come. They were ‘signs’, perhaps even signposts, not the reality itself. People knew there was more to come. When Jesus entered Jerusalem, on what we call Palm Sunday, the crowd not only greeted him as the expected king who was heir to David’s throne, but clearly thought that David’s restored kingdom was to be inaugurated there and then. Wright translates Mark’s version of the greeting (Mk. 11:9) as ‘Welcome to the kingdom of our father David, the kingdom coming right now’.¹⁴ Yet the kingdom did not dawn as they had hoped and were still hoping for as ‘he was taken up before their eyes’ (Acts 1:6). It was never this king’s mission to re-establish the nationalistic kingdom of Israel, but rather to fulfil the covenant to Israel in a new unimagined way. His mission was to bring the story of Israel to fulfilment and let God be true to his word by establishing ‘a new Israel’ (Gal. 6:6). It would include

14 *Ibid.*

those who had previously been ‘excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world’ (Eph 2:12). So Paul explains, ‘This mystery [of Christ] is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus’ (Eph. 3:6).

(d) This kingdom is yet to be consummated

That’s why we still pray, ‘Your kingdom come’. George Eldon Ladd describes Jesus’ mission on earth as ‘fulfillment without consummation’.¹⁵ The mission of Jesus is a crucial stage in the final establishment of the kingdom of God. As Ladd says elsewhere, ‘The whole mission of Jesus including his words, deeds, death, and resurrection constituted an initial defeat of satanic power that makes the final outcome and triumph of God’s kingdom certain’.¹⁶ And it is to that future kingdom we turn.

3. THE COMING KINGDOM EXPLORED MORE FULLY

(a) The coming kingdom in the teaching of Jesus

i. The direct teaching of Jesus

Jesus spoke explicitly of the kingdom as something future on more than one occasion, such as when he spoke about ‘the Son of

¹⁵ George Eldon Ladd, *The Presence of the Future*, rev. ed., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974, pp. 105-21.

¹⁶ George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, Guildford: Lutterworth Press, 1974, p. 66.



Man coming into his kingdom', in Matthew 16:28, or at the last supper in Mark 14:25, or when he sought to dampen expectation about its imminent arrival, in Luke. 19:11. But it is in the parables that the future dimension of the kingdom becomes most evident.

ii. The parables of Jesus

Several parables are collected in Matthew's neat way, in chapter 13 of his gospel. The parable of the sower (vs 1-23) emphasizes the present reality of God's kingdom where we sow 'the message of the kingdom' and encounter various responses as a result. There is no particular stress on the harvest here. In the parable of the weeds (vs 24-30), however, there is an emphasis on the harvesters who separate weeds from wheat, burning the first and storing the second. According to the interpretation Jesus gives (13:36-43), this is not a parable about belonging to a mixed church but a description of the way the kingdom of God operates in the world. Ladd succinctly captures it in a sentence: 'The Kingdom has come, but society is not uprooted'.¹⁷ The parable points to the future, to a final judgment and banishment of all evil and the full future vindication of the righteous who, 'will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father' (v 43, cf. Dan 12:3). While other parables like that of the mustard seed and yeast (vs 31-35) deal with the enigmatic nature of the spread of the kingdom, and the parables of the hidden treasure and fine pearls (vs 44-46) stresses the joy of discovering the kingdom, the final parable in the series, that of the net, returns to the theme of judgment 'at the end of the age' (vs 47-52). The kingdom may have arrived in Jesus but it has not yet reached its culmination.

17 Ladd, *Presence of the Future*, p. 233.

iii. The Signs of The 'End'

Understandably, much attention has been paid to the apocalyptic discourses, which occur in Matthew 24, and the parallels of Mark 13 and Luke 21.

The whole discourse is traditionally interpreted as about the ultimate coming of Christ into his kingdom. Consequently, people have been fascinated by the signs of his coming and noted the catastrophic changes which will herald that coming. The signs of the approaching end, are false messiahs, wars, famines, earthquakes, persecution, increase of wickedness, declining love, and the preaching of the gospel to the whole world (Mt. 24:4-14). The catastrophe involves the abomination of the Holy Place, days of great distress, people fleeing their homes and cosmic signs of a darkened sun and moon and stars falling from the sky (vs. 15-29). All this immediately heralds the 'the coming of the Son of Man' like lightening (v 27), 'with power and great glory' (v 30), when he gathers 'his elect from the four winds from one end of the heavens to the other' (v 31).

The introduction, which explains the context of the discourse, links the coming of the Son of Man closely to the destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple (vs 1-3) which occurred in AD 70. Many of the details fit with that time which brought about 'the end of the age' as far as Israel was concerned. It was a judgement of God, provoked by their refusal to recognize Jesus as the Messiah. So, an increasing number, like Tom Wright, argue this is not about the Second Coming¹⁸

Others including Dick France, rightly I think, see the disciples, following Jesus prediction of the destruction of the Temple, as

18 N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, London: SPCK, 1996, pp. 339-68. In private correspondence on 27/10/2000, Wright said, 'I believe with cheerful delight in the second coming of Jesus, as taught by Acts and Paul for a start, but I don't think Jesus himself taught it [the disciples hadn't even grasped the fact that he was going to die.]



posing a double question in verse 3, ‘Tell us...when will this happen and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age.’ The first question relates to the more immediate situation and the other to ‘the end of the age’. They argue that a change takes place in verse 36. So, verses 34-35 sum up the first section and include the promise that ‘this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened’. Verse 36, then, begins with a contrast, ‘but concerning that day’, and speaks of a time in the future which is unknown. The new emphasis is on being ready at any time for the final arrival of the Son of Man rather than living as people did in the days of Noah when they were distracted and totally unaware of what is about to happen. The call, then, is to be always prepared ‘because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him’ (v 44).

The third and traditional position interprets the whole passage as about the second coming and points out that verse 14 and more significantly verse 30 were hardly fulfilled in AD 70. But verse 14 may be said to have been fulfilled in Paul’s mission and by others. Similarly, verse 30 is not an obstacle to applying this to the destruction of Jerusalem unless one interprets it literally rather than through the lens of apocalyptic and of the OT scriptures it echoes. The destruction of Jerusalem and its temple, apocalyptically, could be seen as the dramatic intervention of the Son of Man. Those opting for the traditional view, can point to the close parallel between the verses pre and post verse 36 and argue, therefore, that their interpretation is more coherent.

Whichever interpretation is adopted, all point to the fact that the story of God’s coming kingdom has not yet reached its final chapter. We may differ on what the chapters prior to this final one contains, and even, indeed, how many chapters there will be. But we know the story is not over yet.

(b) The coming kingdom in Paul's writings

Paul only refers to the kingdom of God ten times, outside of Acts¹⁹ – mainly to talk of it as a present realm we can enter or a future inheritance we will receive. Yet the whole thrust of his ministry was oriented towards the future (e.g., 1 Cor. 3:10-15; 9:24-27; 2 Cor. 11:2; 1 Thess. 2:19), as was the whole of the Christian life (e.g., Rom. 12:19; 14:10-12; 2 Cor. 5:10; Eph 5:25-27; Phil. 3:17-20; 1 Thess. 5:1-11; 2 Thess. 1:3-12).

For our purposes the statement about the kingdom of God in 1 Corinthians 15:24-26 is the most significant reference.

²⁴ Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. ²⁵ For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. ²⁶ The last enemy to be destroyed is death.

His vision is of a world put to rights because all God's enemies have been vanquished, all God's people have been vindicated and transformed, and God himself assumes his rightful place in the creation, reigning supreme, 'all in all' (1 Cor. 15:28). The same vision is expressed in different language in Ephesians 1:10 when what God has purposed in Christ will 'be put into effect when the times reach their fulfillment – to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ'. Similar thought forms are found in Colossians 1:20, where Paul looks forward to 'all things' (which, since the context is that of creation, does not mean a few individuals) will be reconciled to God because of the peace Christ has made on the cross.

His kingdom is categorically closely related to his cross, not something different from it, as Colossians 1:20, and other texts,

19 Rom. 14:17; 1 Cor. 4:20; 6:9-10; 15:24; 50; Gal 5:21; Eph. 5:5; Col 4:11; 1 Thess. 2:12; 2 Thess. 1:5.



show. As Jeremy Treat has recently written, ‘One need not choose between the kingdom and the cross, for the cross is royal and the kingdom is cruciform’.²⁰ Briefly, the problem for humanity is a rejection of God’s rule which results in a subjection to Satan’s control. Consequently if people are to be rescued Satan must be defeated, which is what Christ accomplished on the cross (that is *Christus Victor*). But he did not do this superficially. He did it by pulling the rug from under Satan’s feet and removing the ground by which he could keep people enslaved, which is that they are sinners. Christ dealt with humanity’s problem both by defeating humanity’s enemy, Satan, and by paying the penalty of our sin which Satan exploited (that is penal substitution). So Satan, like the serpent in Eden, no longer has a leg to stand on, and his rule is unmasked for the deception it is.²¹

(c) The coming kingdom in NT Apocalyptic

Another major and different perspective on the coming kingdom is found in the apocalyptic writings of the NT. We have already noted Matthew 24 and parallels but here I’m thinking of 2 Peter 3 and Revelation. They need to be understood and interpreted through the lens of apocalyptic rather than being taken to be in a literal, superficial way. Apocalyptic operated according to a set of conventions through visions of momentous cosmic disturbances that lay beyond normal human or creational experience, and made use of numerical and other codes.

Peter’s apocalyptic uses traditional terminology about ‘the last days’ and ‘the day of the Lord’ which will come unexpectedly, ‘like a thief’. His vision of that day is of the cataclysmic recreation of the present cosmos and the coming of ‘a new heaven and a

20 Jeremy R. Treat: *The Crucified King: Atonement and Kingdom in Biblical and Systematic Theology*, Grand Rapids: Baker, 2014, p. 141.

21 *Ibid.*, p. 204.

new earth where righteousness dwells'. Although he does not explicitly relate this to God's reign, the cumulative effect of his language leads us to conclude that this is God's righteous rule taking its unchallenged place. As Dale Patrick has said, 'The kingdom of God comes at the end of time as the culmination of everything that has happened from creation until now'.²²

Revelation, more obviously, is about the triumph of God's rule in the face of unspeakable evil. Behind the experience of setback and persecution, all of which were foretold in Jesus' teaching, believers need to understand that God remains on his throne and remains worthy to receive 'glory honour and power' (Rev. 4:11). At the centre of the throne stands the lion who, in reality, turns out to be a slain lamb. He has 'triumphed' over all evil through the shedding of his blood (Rev 5:4-6). His victory may not yet be universally evident, but they are secure nonetheless. The conflict may be fierce, and there will be many casualties en route, but the day will come when the battle reaches its dénouement and the heavenly warrior will defeat the beast and all who have joined with him in rebellion against God. Then the devil will be 'thrown into the lake of burning sulphur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown' (20:10). Creation will then celebrate the one who is 'King of Kings and Lord of Lords' (19:16) and God will resume his place at the heart of the new creation and in the midst of redeemed humanity (21:1-22:5).

The promise of his coming to bring God's kingdom to fulfilment remains a promise to this day. He says he is coming 'soon', imminently, at any time. Until he does we continue to pray, in Jesus' own words, 'Your kingdom come' or in the closing words of Scripture, 'Amen. Come, Lord Jesus'.

22 Dale Patrick, 'The Kingdom of God in the Old Testament' in *The Kingdom of God in the 20th Century Interpretation*, ed. Wendall Willis, Peabody: Hendrickson, 1987, cited by Waltke, 'The Kingdom of God: Definition and Story' p. 55.



To pray that is to express the longing for the day when the world will be free from all that troubles it now, because it has sought to dislodge God from his throne. To pray that is to express the hope that what we saw as glimpses of God's kingdom in the life of Jesus may become our all-consuming reality. To pray that is to express faith in God that however fierce the battle, however great the disappointments, however delayed the coming, he will one day reign unchallenged in his creation. To pray that is to place ourselves under his reign now and to live before our time, as it were, as obedient subjects of the great King. For to pray 'Your kingdom come' is also to pray, 'Your will be done on earth,' not simply sometime in the future by all but now in the present by me.

Theologians have swung between seeing the kingdom as purely future (Weiss and Schweitzer) to seeing it as wholly realized in the present (Dodd). Others have focused not on the grand picture but the detailed sequence that will lead to his coming, and especially to the continuing place of Israel in that story. But Jesus has brought the future into the present; the kingdom is already here, even if it has not yet reached its fulfilment. Our task is not to speculate on God's timetable, which is unknown, or even his steps towards that unknown day, but to live now, under the sovereignty of God, in anticipation of the way we will live then. To appropriate what Tom Wright wrote about 1 Corinthians 13 and apply it to the coming kingdom of God, "It is the music God has written for all his creatures to sing, and we are called to learn it and practise it now so as to be ready when the conductor brings down his baton."²³



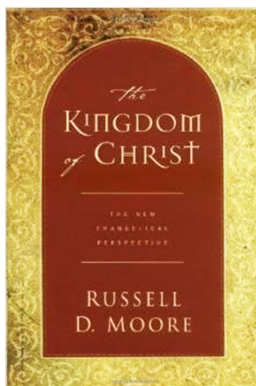
23 Wright, *Surprised by Hope*, p. 301.

Reviews

The Journal of Messianic Jewish Studies



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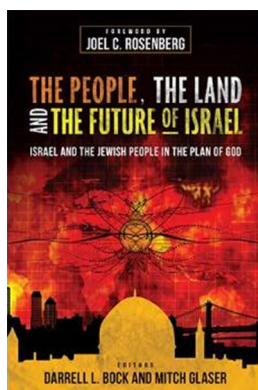


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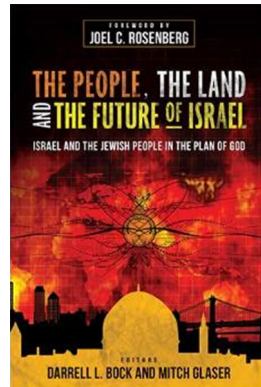
נר-לרגלי דברך ואור לנתיבתי

(Psalm 119:105)



Bock, Darrell L., and Mitch Glaser. *The People, the Land, and the Future of Israel: Israel and the Jewish People in the Plan of God*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2014. pp 349. \$16.99.

Review by S. S. Ilchishin



INTRODUCTION

The People, the Land, and the Future of Israel: Israel and the Jewish People in the Plan of God (hereafter *PLFI*) is a collection of essays by top evangelical minds about Israel and her people as they relate to theology in the OT, NT, Jewish Rabbinic thought, Christian hermeneutics, and eschatology. The collection was edited, as well as contributed to, by Mitch Glaser, President of Chosen People Ministries, and Darrell Bock, NT scholar, and senior research professor at Dallas Theological Seminary.



SUMMARY & EVALUATION

“The People, the Land, and the Future of Israel” conference was held in New York City in October 2013. PLFI contains the papers and essays presented at this conference. The topics covered are the people, the Land, and the future of Israel as relating to the Hebrew Scriptures (chapters 1-4), the New Testament (chapters 5-8), Hermeneutics, Theology and Church History (chapters 9-13), and finally Practical Theology (chapters 14-17). Each chapter provides an excellent “suggested reading” list and questions for discussion. Experts in their respective fields, such as Walter Kaiser, Michael Brown, Darrell Bock, Craig Evans, Mark Saucy, Michael Vlach, and Mitch Glaser (et. al.) weigh in on the issues.

Hebrew Scriptures

A prominent theme in the Torah (the first five books of the Hebrew Bible) is that everything is created for God’s glory; the same goes for Israel, this section claims (37). Israel was chosen for a mission and was given the promise that the people would endure until the very end of time, and in the world to come. Walter Kaiser concludes that the Hebrew canon ends with the promise given to David, namely that God indissolubly connected His name with David, his line, and the Land (51). The prophetic vision, as observed by Robert Chislom Jr., is return from exile as a people and the restoration of Zion (66). For this to happen the people of Israel have to be a viable political entity in the Land of Israel.

Michael Brown links these themes as they are seen by the rabbis. He explains that rabbinic literature looks forward as much as it looks to the past, maybe even more so. Rabbinic literature



also sees in the pages of Scripture a “paradise restored” (80). The prophets foretell, and rabbinic literature echoes, says Brown, that there will come a time when Israel will not be uprooted (82). And he reminds the readers that dwelling in the Land, in the presence of God, is the ultimate expression of Jewish future hope (*ibid*).

New Testament

Chapters 5-8 seek to engage the misconception that the gentile “international” Church has replaced Israel as the people of God. The conclusions made by the authors in contradiction to this theory are: (1) the Gospels teach that the Church is part of the promises to Israel, and the Kingdom of Heaven includes the restoration of the Land (100); (2) for the writer of Acts, gentile inclusion does not mean Israel’s exclusion (113); (3) Romans 9-11 explains the current (post-cross) and future *chosen-ness* of Israel and her coming restoration (123-30); (4) the audience of the Epistles are for the most part genetic descendants of Abraham and are constantly reminded by the authors of God’s promises to Israel (ethnic) and the application to all who choose to follow the God of Israel and place their trust in his Son, the Jewish Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth (145).

Hermeneutics, Theology and Church History

This section takes the reader on a journey through the often misunderstood and more often contended issue of hermeneutics. Craig Blaising attempts to show the weakness of “replacement theology.” A more holistic reading of the Bible is preferable, he argues (165). A redefining of Israel (best case) or outright replacement (worse case) is to ignore the theological importance



of Israel and its people, and trade a robust eschatology for a thin concept of the Kingdom of God (*ibid*).

The next chapters cover the necessity of Israel in Biblical Theology (Saucy), in eschatology (Feinberg), and throughout Church history (Vlach). Saucy seeks to explain the crucial part Israel plays in the biblical narrative, and not only the people, but also the Land. For his part, Feinberg looks to Daniel 9:24-27, Zechariah 12, and Isaiah 19:16-25. For Feinberg, these prophecies are proof that there needs to be a literal Israel. Furthermore, Israel's rejection of Messiah did not cancel out these prophecies (193).

Vlach and Leventhal tackle Israel in Church history. Vlach specifically covers the view of Israel throughout Church history. He reviews for the reader the development of "replacement theology" and also the development of the Church's recognition that there is a future for Israel. He correctly concludes that Israel is a mixed bag in Church history (209).

For Leventhal, despite the Holocaust's dark shadow on history, the rebirth of Israel looks forward and allows for the spiritual rebirth of Israel that is envisioned by the Scriptures in the world to come. Coming through Jewish and non-Jewish thinkers and theologians who grapple with the Holocaust, Leventhal concludes that, "God planted a Zionist component" into His people, a desire to return to the Land of their fathers, and despite the horrors of history, He is leading His people home. One of the longer chapters in the book, it connects the reader with an often overlooked issue in the Christian world.

Practical Theology

The last and final section of the book literally deals with more practical matters. However it begins with the immortality of



the Jewish people. Its author, Michael Rydelnik, posits that the continued existence of the Jewish people is evidence for the truth of Scripture. He suggests that the Church should take God at His word; if God said that He will never forsake the Jewish people, then He meant it. God has kept His people, restored them to the Land, kept for Himself a remnant (e.g. Messianic Jews), and will also be true to His word for the future and final restoration of Zion.

The last of three chapters of the final section deal with: Evangelism (Glaser); Israel and the local pastor (Epstein); and a brief survey on the view of Israel in modern day seminaries (Hagg). Glaser and Epstein argue for the need for Jewish evangelism and the Church's calling to love the Jewish people, respectively. Christian love for the Jewish people should lead to bridge building, and an honest, bold evangelism that shows the Jewish people their Jewish Messiah. Both do a quality job expressing the need for the Church to reach out to the Jewish community.

Hagg, commenting on a ten-question survey sent to 70 seminaries, sees an unfortunate trend in evangelical scholarship – namely, an apathy or under-appreciation of the Jewish people and Israel as they relate to the topics discussed in this book. The book ends on a somewhat low note and the last chapter offers little by way of conclusion. It simply states the case and offers no solution to the apparent apathy towards Israel in today's seminaries.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

The purpose of PLFI is to present a broadly Pre-Millennial view on what the Bible teaches about the Jewish people, the Land of



Israel, and the future of Israel. It can provide Bible students with a much-needed, broad biblical theology on the subject. The book, its authors, and editors accomplish this fairly well. However, PLFI's strength is also its weakness. It seems it was written for a lay audience and would not serve as a strong academic book, although this should not discourage professors from using it in the classroom. However, an expanded, more academic version of this book and its contents is needed, perhaps in a multi-volume set. The arguments presented in this book are not entirely new, but that is hardly an issue to bring up as some reviewers have. These "tested" arguments are compiled into one book, easily accessible in one volume, and this makes PLFI an excellent primer.



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Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

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(Psalm 119:105)



Zadok, David, "A Messianic Jewish Response to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict," *Borough Park Symposium 4*, http://www.chosenpeople.com/symposium/papers2014/Topic_3_David_Zadok_Main_Paper.pdf. February, 2014.

Teplinsky, Sandra, "Response to David Zadok on 'A Messianic Jewish Response to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict,'" *Borough Park Symposium 4*, http://www.chosenpeople.com/symposium/papers2014/Topic_3_Sandra_Teplinsky_Response_Paper.pdf. February, 2014.

Rood, Judith, "The Messianic Movement and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: Understanding the Evangelical Palestinian Resistance," *Borough Park Symposium 4*, http://www.chosenpeople.com/symposium/papers2014/Topic_3_Judith_Rood_Response_Paper.pdf. February, 2014.



INTRODUCTION

From February 16-18, 2015, the fourth gathering of the Borough Park Symposium met in New York City. Messianic Jewish leaders and scholars from around the world came together to discuss and present Messianic Jewish perspectives on the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict. From the symposium organizers' own description the goal was to cover, "biblical and theological perspectives on the modern state of Israel; relationships between Israel and its neighbors, and between Jewish and Arab Yeshua-believers," as well as how to, "frame the way we speak about Israel and the Middle East within the Messianic Jewish community and to the broader Christian world." The results were not nearly as monolithic as one might expect. In this short review we would like to summarize and reflect on one of the Symposium's segments which had contributors who held some of the more divergent perspectives.

The topic of this segment was, "A Messianic Jewish Response to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict" and its primary contributor was David Zadok, pastor of Grace and Truth Congregation in Israel and the Field Director of Christian Witness to Israel, HaGefen Publishing. Responding to Zadok's presentation were author, minister, and speaker Sandra Teplinsky, president and founder of Light of Zion, a Messianic outreach to Israel and the Church based in California and Jerusalem, and Dr. Judith Rood, Professor of Middle East Studies at Biola University in La Mirada, California.

SUMMARY AND EVALUATION

In his paper, David Zadok focuses primarily on the biblical relationship between the people of Israel and the Land of Israel.



He highlights the overarching plan of God to redeem and restore mankind as He deals with the problem of sin and enmity, tracing the Land promises throughout the biblical narrative. Using an analogy similar to Messiah's statement that the Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath, Zadok suggests that the Land was made for man and not man for the Land. This does not negate or downplay the importance of the Land in the outworking of God's Kingdom plan, but rather helps place it in its proper context. That God is and always has been more concerned with the redemption of people from every tribe, nation, and tongue than He has been with the Land is the paradigm through which Zadok suggests Messianic Jews ought to view the current Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

As Zadok applies this paradigm he mentions the vastly different hermeneutics employed by both Messianic Jewish Israelis and Palestinian Christians, briefly touching on their impact. He acknowledges the tough questions that both sides must ask about Palestinian suffering and threats to Israel's security, and concludes with suggested ways forward for Messianic Jews. He exhorts Messianic Jews to listen to and try to understand their Palestinian Christian brothers; acknowledge and at times be critical of Israel's misuse of military power; support Israel's right to protect herself from Islamic terrorism; and remember that the battle is not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers. Thus, Messianic Jews must continue to share the Gospel in Israel with Jew and Arab alike, and allow their views to be shaped by the Word of God and not by nationalistic identity.

Sandra Teplinsky offers her paper as a supplement to Zadok's. She provides some deeper exegetical insights on certain passages highlighted by Zadok, including Hebrews 11:10 and Genesis 3:15. Building upon Zadok's mention of hermeneutics, Teplinsky expounds upon the deleterious effects that Liberation Theology



has had on some Palestinian Christians as well as their Western supporters. She summarizes their view as stating, “the Bible has no meaning in and of itself. Instead, the meaning of Scripture (especially regarding Israel) is said to derive from subjective interaction between reader and text A critical question is how much subjectivity ought to be considered within the bounds of fair discussion in an honest search for biblical truth,” (Teplinsky, 2). A key conclusion for her is that without being on the same page in interpreting biblical truth, there is no chance of reconciliation based on any truth.

Teplinsky addresses the historical, political, and legal issues in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, with specific responses to mainstream Palestinian culture. She does a masterful job tracing the legal rights that Israel has to the Land in accordance with International Law, and exposes Israel’s dissenters as employing lawfare—“the manipulation of traditional Western law so as to undermine the principles on which that law is based, and thereby achieve otherwise unattainable, extremist political goals,” (Teplinsky, 3)—to delegitimize Israel.

She concludes with a call for Messianic Jew’s and Palestinian Christian’s to take their personal hurt, pride, ill feelings toward Israelis and Palestinian’s to the cross; that this will open the floodgates of forgiveness, and ultimately hearken the return of the King.

With an expertise in Arab Studies, Judith Rood centers on understanding the “Evangelical Palestinian Resistance.” She begins by giving a sweeping and precise overview of how the political situation in the Arab world has been shaped through the twentieth century and suggests the current Israeli-Palestinian conflict resulted from Western influence in the region post-WWII and post-Cold War. As a result the rise of radical Islamist regimes attempting to reverse those results and expunge Western



influence from what were once Islamic lands, the “Palestinian Resistance” is viewed as the only viable option “for some evangelical Palestinians to express their political will, to have some sense of participating in their national rejection of the legitimacy of Israel,” (Rood, 2).

This unlikely marriage between a group of non-violent evangelicals and violent resistance organizations has been forged through the introduction of Liberation Theology into the Palestinian Christian narrative, has thrived through Sabeel, an ecumenical organization spear-headed by Anglican minister Naim Ateek, and has found its most prominent expression in the “Christ at the Checkpoint” conference series. Rood provides a pointed critique of the Palestinian *Kairos Document* and concludes that its underlying philosophy, “makes it an impossible basis for reconciliation between Messianic Jews and Palestinian Christians. Like the Hamas Charter, the Palestinian Christian document articulates an eschatological rejection of the Jewish state,” (Rood, 4).

With such divergent historical narratives at play, even among Messianic Jews and Palestinian Christians, Rood suggests a way for the two groups to seek reconciliation in the absence of peace. She points to the joint work of Lisa Loden and Salim Munayer, *Through My Enemies Eyes: Envisioning Reconciliation in Israel-Palestine*, as a template to follow. This template sees the two authors coming together to hear, understand, and respect each side’s historical view of events as well as biblical hermeneutic, accepting each other’s presence while rejecting voices that call for the destruction of either, and meeting each other at the foot of the Cross.

Such an attempt at reconciliation in the absence of peace and in the absence of agreement on historical narrative is respectable and admirable especially for followers of Messiah. However,



it is not an easy undertaking, even for followers of Messiah. This is emblematic in what is perhaps the most stirring portion of Rood's paper. Her epilogue relays the story of Palestinian Christian leader, Sami Awad, who spent the night in a children's bunk during a visit to Auschwitz. His view of Israel was greatly impacted by the experience as he stared at "drawings these children had left behind, pictures of children playing drawn by children who would never play again," (Rood, 8). He suddenly understood the impact that the Holocaust has had in shaping Israel, her desire and drive to exist and to never again be under the thumb of foreign rulers. As he shared this testimony at the "Christ at the Checkpoint" conference in 2010, he passionately called for Palestinian Christians to lead the way in seeking non-violent peace with Israel, with an understanding of Jewish history, and the fear and pain of the past. He declared, "We must be a voice of truth in suffering, on behalf of all people, including the Jewish people who have not had the opportunity to heal," (Rood, 9). His words were a glimmer of hope. Sadly, Rood shares that since he uttered the words in 2010 he has distanced himself from the comments. She believes because of pressure from the "Resistance."

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

The three authors each took different approaches in examining what the Messianic Jewish response to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict ought to be. Zadok appealed primarily to Scripture understood and applied; Teplinsky reinforced Zadok's view and added the importance of the legal legitimacy of Israel's right to the Land in the face of radical "lawfare" perpetuated by extremists; and, Rood brought a greater understanding of how



both Israeli and Palestinian historical narratives have impacted the current situation. In proposing pathways to reconciliation, Teplinsky and Rood hold clearly opposite views on the need for mutual agreement on biblical and historical truth. Despite this, what stood out the most to this reviewer is how each contributor emphasized the need for the centrality of the Cross in any attempt at reconciliation or peace. Even when discussing a conflict so complex, with waters muddied by outside influences, disagreements on truth, and polarized historical narratives—the Cross remains the only place where reconciliation can be found.



Stephen Spector, *Evangelicals and Israel: The Story of American Christian Zionism*.
Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, Inc. 2009. 338 pp. \$29.95
ISBN-13: 978-0-19-536802-4

Review by Richard H. Flashman



Stephen Spector is a professor of English at Stony Brook University. In addition to *Evangelicals and Israel* (2008) he is the author of *Operation Solomon: The Daring Rescue of the Ethiopian Jews* (2005) and most recently *May I Quote You On That?: A Guide to Grammar and Usage* (2015). Although Jewish, Spector is no stranger to the New Testament or Christianity as he has spent his career studying and teaching both. Spector's nuanced treatment of the book's topic provides a significant witness to his understanding of the New Testament and conservative Christian beliefs. In addition, he seems to have invested a great deal of time and energy interacting with



both leaders and members of evangelical and Christian Zionist movements for a sustained period of time across the opinion spectrum. His subsequent realization of the complexity of motivations surrounding evangelical support for Israel is further evidence of the author's intellectual honesty and competency for writing this comprehensive account of evangelical support for the Jewish people and the nation of Israel.

Spector comes at this issue from a secular Jewish perspective. His interest is academic and reflects a genuine desire to help the Jewish community in America understand the nuance and complexities of evangelical support. In doing this he conveys an insider's understanding of Jewish sensibilities on the topic and a certain Jewish bemusement over exuberant evangelical expressions of worship and friendship.

Spector's book is an extensive and thoughtful search for the motivation behind, what is to Spector, the surprising American evangelical support for the state of Israel and its warm feelings for the Jewish people. He points out that there is great suspicion in the Jewish community towards evangelicals and their support for Israel. It is hard for them to get past their deep political differences on domestic issues; their fear of the loss of acceptance and opportunity that a more Christianized society might bring; and for many Jews, the belief that down deep evangelical Christians, in the end, expect Jewish people to convert or die based on popular Christian eschatological expectations (viii). This is why when Jewish people are asked to rate their feelings "temperature" toward evangelicals from 0°– 100°, they average in at a very brisk 24 degrees fahrenheit.

But the opposite is true of evangelicals. Their average feelings "temperature" toward Jewish people comes in at a very comfortable 68° with 75% of evangelicals expressing favorable or very favorable attitudes towards the Jewish people. These



feelings have only grown stronger over the last forty years (viii). Yet, Jewish people see evangelicals as second only to Muslims in their anti-Semitism (viii).

What is one to make of this unrequited love? Spector spends much of his book trying to get to the bottom of this disconnect. In the process he examines Christian Zionism. He does this by trying to explain and define Christian Zionism through his often humorous (from a Jewish perspective) personal experience of it at their gatherings. He introduces some of the major Christian Zionist groups and leaders and attempts to get a handle on their core beliefs. These core beliefs include the restoration of national Israel, aversions to replacement theology, and a view of the end-times which sees a great time of suffering for Israel and the world, followed by the return of Jesus to rescue Israel and establish his 1000 year reign from Jerusalem over the whole earth. He then goes into the particulars, identifying and describing the variety and complexity of motivations surrounding Christian Zionism. These include the promise of blessing in the Abrahamic Covenant for all who bless the Jewish people; Israel as God's prophetic clock and proof of his faithfulness to his word; the warning of God's judgment (curses) on those who seek to oppose or harm the Jewish people; genuine love and gratitude toward Biblical Jewish faith as the root and foundation of their own faith; deep remorse over past so-called Christian anti-Semitism; and a genuine appreciation for a brave frontline ally (which acts as a bulwark) in the war against radical Islamic terrorism.

Spector then attempts to educate his non-evangelical reader on the historical theology of evangelicalism which helps Spector and the reader to understand the significant diversity of thought, paths to faith, social and political convictions, and beliefs about the relationship between the church, Israel, and the Jewish people.



Spector then devotes two chapters to unpacking the Christian Zionist perceptions and relationship to the Arab and Muslim world. Spector points to a strong belief among Christian Zionists that trading land for peace with the Palestinian Arabs will never work, that the Arab Muslims are implacable enemies of the Jewish people and will not rest until the Jewish state ceases to exist. Democracy is not the answer for the Palestinians because they will just vote in hate groups like Hamas as they did in 2006. For Christian Zionists, it is all part of the greater war with radical Islam. Once the “Saturday people” are defeated they will be coming for the “Sunday people.” For many Christian Zionists, the conflict with radical Islam is an existential threat to their freedom and security and constitutes nothing less than a new (Third?) World War (69). Christian Zionists are thus convinced that radical Islam cannot be appeased, and rather, must be defeated. For their part, many Arab Muslims with the opposite and opposing perspective feel the same way toward Israel and the decadent Christian west.

In chapter five Spector delves into the theological roots of the antipathy between Christian Zionists and Islam. For many this is a clash between the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and Allah. Spector points out that evangelicals have a very low view of Islam (82). To them, according to the Koran, Islam is not a religion of peace. It has never gone through a reformation and thus the only true expression of Islam is its fundamental version (88).

Spector then goes into the history of the conflict between Christianity and Islam, including their many significant theological differences and their deep seated animosity toward each other. Spector brings out that both Christian Zionists and many Muslims have a sort of mirror image eschatology, in which a world in conflict and chaos is brought to the brink of



destruction only to be rescued by each faith's version of a Savior. In fact, both sides accuse each other of trying to advance their eschatological agendas in precisely the same ways (109).

Having described Christian Zionist positions in great detail Spector examines the criticism of the movement which he says comes down to four principle charges:

1. They want Jews to return to Israel in order to speed up their deaths, mass conversion, and the return of Jesus to set up his millennial kingdom.
2. Evangelicals just want to convert Jews.
3. Christian Zionism is a distortion of true Christianity which seeks justice for all the oppressed (in this case, the Palestinians).
4. "Evangelical Zionists are allied with right-wing of Israeli politicians in opposing the exchange of land for peace," which according to many on the center-left "poses a greater danger to the Jewish state than terrorism does" (111).

Spector examines each of these charges in detail and gives the defenders of Christian Zionism an opportunity to refute them. He then spends his seventh chapter looking into the fourth charge, tracing the alliance of Christian Zionists to the political right in Israel. What the Israeli right have come to recognize as a key alliance, the left in both Israel and the U.S. have come to distrust and view as dangerous (148).

In chapter eight Spector takes on the charge that evangelical support for Israel is grounded in tragic, dispensational end-time scenarios for the Jewish people. He shows that while such a scenario exists, it is by and large not the great evangelical motivation for supporting Israel and most Jewish leaders are not bothered by it. Rather they appreciate evangelical support



whatever the motivation. Spector cites the common joke told in mostly Jewish circles: If Messiah comes and says “Hello, nice to see you again,” Jews will need to repent. If he says, “Nice to meet you” then it will be the Christians who will have to apologize to the Jews. For most Jewish leaders, Christian support trumps even some of the strange (in their eyes) reasons for that support. Many Christian leaders concede that the state of Israel will lead to the Second Coming of the Messiah Jesus, but this is not the prime motivation for their support for Israel, and warn detractors not to confuse this belief for a motive (179).

In Spector’s ninth chapter he seeks to get to the bottom of the evangelical motivation for supporting Israel. In particular: Do evangelicals, at least in significant part, support Israel to hasten the Second Coming of the Messiah Jesus and its troubling scenario, from the Jewish point of view, of convert or die? In the end, says Spector, the answer to their question cannot be fully discerned because there are so many and varied motivations at work. Yet Spector asserts that millions of Christians believe that through Israel’s rebirth in 1948, the prophetic clock has resumed its ticking, and Christian support for the Jewish state, in all its various forms, can be used of God to hasten Jesus’ return (200).

The remainder of Spector’s book has to do with President George W. Bush and the events, politics, and policies of his administration vis-à-vis the Jewish state, terrorism, and the Arab-Israeli Conflict.

Interestingly, Spector ends his volume with an end-time scenario quote from no lesser light than Hal Lindsey of *Late Great Planet Earth* fame. He quotes Lindsey declaring that soon “God will liberate his people Israel and bring a remnant to true faith in His Messiah” (253). A re-statement of the very same painful eschatological scenario that so many Jews suspect motivates evangelical support for Israel.



Spector's purpose for writing *Evangelicals and Israel* seems to be driven by a genuine desire to understand the phenomena of conservative Christian (evangelical) support for the state of Israel and its warm feelings toward the Jewish people. As he makes clear in the preface, many Jewish people are skeptical of evangelicals and their motives for such support. Historically, the Jewish experience with conservative Christianity has not been a good one. Most of the anti-Semitism, persecution, pogroms, inquisition, and atrocities perpetuated against European Jewry has come from the right wing precincts of European society often instigated by so called Christians. Jews have a right to be concerned about right of center nationalistic movements which are often driven by religious (conservative Christian) interests. Jewish memories are long and hard to shake.

The bottom line is that Jewish people do not trust conservative Christians and their motives. One gets the sense that Spector himself does not know if this is justified or not when it comes to evangelical support for Israel, and genuinely wants to discover their motivations and report his findings. That being said, there does seem to be a part of Spector that wants to debunk the half truths, stereotypes, simplistic analysis, and myths associated with the topic. He is careful to dig deep and not settle for superficial answers. This rigorous search for the truth gives the reader a sense that Spector thinks the high level of Jewish mistrust for evangelical support is not entirely called for. One senses he would like to see a warming of attitudes toward evangelicals especially from the American Jewish side. (148)

In the end, Spector seems to sympathize with those who say "So what?" (158-161) So what if some Christians are motivated by distasteful (to Jewish sensibilities) eschatological expectations? Israel and the Jewish people need friends. There are worse motivations than sincerely held faith convictions about



how history is going to unfold. As long as the support and warmth come without strings attached, who cares why it comes? (160)

So, is Spector successful in reducing Jewish suspicions of evangelical support for Israel and warm feelings toward the Jewish people? To some degree, it seems he is. Just by demonstrating how complex and varied the issue really is, a fair-minded Jewish person would have to concede that there are a number of evangelical motivations that are quite inoffensive to them. These would include Christian recognition of God's covenant love for and faithfulness to Israel, based on the Abrahamic promises, as well as the Christian desire to reflect that same covenant love and faithfulness in their own lives. In other words, these Christians want to get on what they perceive to be the side of God. (188)

That being said, one would have to imagine many readers being unpersuaded by Spector's in- depth analysis because no final definitive answer to evangelical motivation emerges. In addition, at least some of the motivations Spector does uncover would reinforce some negative Jewish narratives (e.g. the evangelical desire to see Jewish people believe in Jesus as their Messiah; the dispensational end times belief that Israel will go through a very difficult time before they are rescued by their Messiah, etc.).

Spector's strengths are as an investigator. He digs down deep to understand the motivations, positions, and practices he observes using a wide variety of means and sources. He is always looking to get at the facts and opposing positions and ideas.

Spector makes a valuable contribution to the topic. He provides a variety of perspectives - Jewish, Muslim, Christian, and secular. He then goes inside these groups to discern the variety of opinions and sub-groups that exist, and then to hear what people in these various groups are communicating to their most ardent and committed supporters.



Spector shows that even within particular sub-groups of a movement there are significant differences (e.g. different beliefs and points of emphasis that exist among evangelical dispensationalists). At the very least, the careful reader should come to appreciate the nuances and complexities of the topic.

On the other hand, Spector never fully answers the question about the motivation of the majority of Christian Zionists. In particular, what percentage support Israel in order to hasten a painful dispensationalist end times scenario? Spector cannot say, mostly because to do so scientifically is nearly impossible (188). But since dispensationalists compose only 2.5% of the American adult population he speculates that the number cannot be that high (188).

In addition, Spector does not examine the Jewish stereotype of dispensational pre-millennialism except for a brief rebuttal. It would have been helpful to have challenged the Jewish understanding of “convert or die.” Without question, no lover of Israel or the Jewish people wants them to suffer or die. While Spector does quote a few Christians on the topic, it is mostly in passing. Dispensational pre-millennialists mainly report their understanding of what they read in Scripture. It may be true that what they read and report is unpleasant for just about everybody (not just the Jewish people), but that does not mean they want that unpleasantness to occur. The suffering of any person at any time is a great tragedy to most Christians. But that does not mean they can ignore it either. That would be decidedly unloving. Christians believe they have received both good news and bad news from God. To withhold either of those messages would be the most unloving, uncaring thing they could do. It would be indifference of a diabolical kind. It would have been helpful if Spector could have shared this Christian perspective with his Jewish readers.



Spector's book is a great lesson in cross-cultural understanding. It issues a cautionary note to anyone tempted to stereotype or generalize about the thinking, beliefs, and motivations of another group. Would that all who consider themselves to be fair-minded, take the time and care to truly understand the actions and practices of others as Spector has done with the Christian Zionist movement. I know that this reviewer plans to apply that lesson to his work going forward.

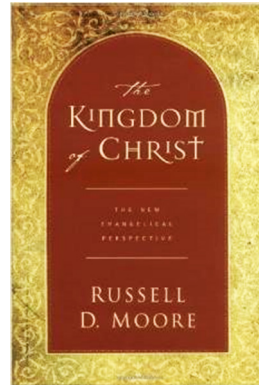
Overall, I would recommend the first nine chapters of this book to anyone interested in the topic. I do not think chapters ten and eleven on Christian Zionist influence on the Bush administration policies are worth the read. Their content is dated and easily extracted from other more expert sources.

But the first nine chapters are unique in their insight into the topic, giving the reader, especially the Jewish reader, a balanced, perspective-broadening experience, which they might find difficult to get elsewhere on the topic of Christian Zionism.



The Kingdom of Christ: The New Evangelical Perspective. By Russell D. Moore. Wheaton, IL: Crossway. 2004. 320 pp. \$21.99 Paper.
ISBN-10: 1581346271 ISBN-13: 978-1581346275

Review by Gregory Hagg



Most honest Christians have a nagging suspicion that they do not have all the answers. Some may not admit this, but they would be labeled extremists at the least. For example, if they were raised in a Reform tradition that equates the Kingdom of Christ with the Church, they might wonder about all the place names, promises, and predictions found in the Hebrew Scriptures that seem to describe a national entity with land, a covenant people, and a future based upon an eternal election by God. Nevertheless, they still might understand the idea of “kingdom theology” only in terms of a “kingdom soteriology” in that the presence of the spiritual Kingdom of Christ precludes any eschatological, literal,



premillennial kingdom. Likewise, they might think of “kingdom ecclesiology” as only pertaining to a heavenly entity with little regard for the socio/political needs of mankind – sort of a parallel universe where the saints are in submission to the King of the Church, which is developing tangentially to the kingdom of this world.

Of course, if they were raised in the strictest form of dispensational premillennialism, they might revel in the biblical passages that predict the coming of Christ to right all wrongs, solve all social and political issues, judge all the wicked, and complete His program. When they pray “Thy kingdom come” they mean it only in a distant eschatological way. The Kingdom of Christ for them is future. Currently, however, they have little concern with ministering to a fallen world. They, too, might disengage from socio/political concerns. They understand that Jesus currently sits on the right hand of God the Father Almighty, but this does not refer to the Kingdom now. It only sets the stage for His return to earth to reign for 1000 years. The nagging suspicion for them, however, is that since Jesus was so compassionate toward the disenfranchised, the lost in this fallen world, they should be concerned as well. What would Jesus do?

Perhaps the two previous extremes are weak caricatures. Nonetheless, no one has all the answers. Consensus should prevail in the Body of Messiah. The Kingdom of Christ with its distinctive New Covenant must have relevance for today and tomorrow. The Kingdom of Christ with its Millennial Rule must also have relevance for today and tomorrow. Bringing the two extremes together has been the byproduct (if not the intent) of research in covenant premillennialism and progressive dispensationalism. The intent of this enlightening book, *The Kingdom of Christ: the New Evangelical Perspective* might be stated as “can’t we all just get along.” Evangelical consensus –



focused on Kingdom Theology is the goal.

Dr. Russell D. Moore has detailed the development of this *rapprochement* in an exceptional way. In what may be the very best treatment of this subject available, Moore's research includes about 900 extensively annotated footnotes and over 900 bibliographic entries. He accurately describes the development of an attitude of reconciliation, beginning with the altercations of the past to the prevailing spirit of respect and unity. He believes the proponents of Evangelical Theology can use the term "kingdom" in a way that seems to satisfy most and unify many. Of course, some will cry out that compromise only weakens a position. Others, however, will welcome the current state of affairs described and promoted by the author. Moore tells the story through the following outline which he uses to champion Kingdom Theology.

Toward A Kingdom Eschatology:
The Kingdom As Already And Not Yet,

Toward A Kingdom Soteriology:
Salvation As Holistic And Christological

Toward A Kingdom Ecclesiology:
The Church As The Kingdom of God.

In the first chapter of the book the reader will find the stimulus behind Moore's intensive research. He is a disciple of Carl F. H. Henry who articulated a major problem that he noticed in the evangelicalism of the post World War II church, namely, the lack of social engagement. In *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism* (1947) Henry opined that evangelical theologians found themselves between two extremes, a kind of fundamentalist Christian social detachment and the liberal Social Gospel (promoted by Walter Rauchenbusch), which rejected the truth of Scripture while using the social ethics of Protestant



liberalism in political programs. He and other leaders of neo-evangelicalism challenged the church to be the salt and light that Jesus taught it to be by making a difference in the world through good works and sharing the Gospel.

Henry felt that there were two extremes within the evangelical world, both of which should be vigorously engaging non-evangelical thought. Extreme dispensationalists, on the one hand, who questioned the present reality of the Kingdom of Christ were tempted to minimize the teachings of the Sermon on the Mount (if not relegate them to a future millennium) or to refuse to recite the Lord's prayer because it had to do with another age. Extreme covenantalists, on the other hand, were tempted to focus primarily on the spiritual justification of individuals while minimizing the material or socio/political needs of people. Whether the emphasis is on a "future" kingdom or a "spiritual" kingdom, both extremes could result in disengagement with the fallen world of the here and now. Both camps could fail to minister properly because of faulty Kingdom thinking. This book is a challenge to develop a Kingdom Theology. Is it possible for all evangelicals to agree on the kingdom concept so as to bring consensus in eschatology, soteriology, and ecclesiology?

Moore attributes movement toward the middle position to the progressive dispensationalists, Robert Saucy, Darrell Bock, and Craig Blaising. Those from the covenant camp who have moved to a more centrist position are Anthony Hoekema, Vern Poythress, Edmund Clowney, and Richard Gaffin. Moore states that "the coalescence with the other tradition on various disputed points seems almost coincidental in the scholarship of both groups," (23-24). Those on the outer fringes of each position struggle with the socio/political ramifications for the church. Some covenant thinkers fear the politicization of the church, and some dispensational thinkers ask if there is a difference between



kingdom ethics and ecclesiastical ethics.

Chapter Two tackles the subject of Kingdom Eschatology. This, of course, is the topic most relevant to the theme of the first edition of the *Journal of Messianic Jewish Studies (JMJS)*, “Thy Kingdom Come.” According to Henry and Moore, too much attention, time, and energy were given to debates about the nature of the millennium and the time of the rapture among both covenant and dispensational theologians. Rather, there should be an emphasis on a present aspect of Kingdom living which will more likely influence the non-Christian world for Christ. The scholar who did the most to promote the “already but not yet” nature of the Kingdom, according to Moore, was George Eldon Ladd following the lead of such scholars as Oscar Cullmann and his inaugurated eschatology (31).

Moore provides excellent documentation for the reaction of earlier dispensational thinkers to the views of Ladd. They felt the messianic kingdom could not be inaugurated until the King returns to Jerusalem, literally. They felt that such an inaugurated eschatology was too much of a compromise between historic premillennialism and amillennialism. They felt that the throne of the kingdom has not been transported to heaven, nor has Jesus begun to rule as the Davidic king promised in the Hebrew Scriptures at His ascension. Moore quotes Charles Feinberg as saying, “That is not ‘historic’ premillennialism, but undiminished and recognizable amillennialism,” (35).

Similar reaction, however, came from the Reformed, amillennial side of the controversy with its Augustinian view that the Kingdom is a spiritual entity in which Christ is ruling in the present day, or somehow there are disembodied souls ruling from heaven. This view left no room for an earthly kingdom, and, therefore did not answer the whole council of God with respect to kingdom teaching. Ladd faced the unwanted theological



continuum of an essentially heavenly and spiritual kingdom of the amillennialists on one end, and the essentially political and futurist kingdom of the dispensational premillennialists on the other.

Moore's next task is to demonstrate that there has been considerable progress, primarily through the Progressive Dispensationalist movement. For the reader who is interested in a cogent, brief but thorough and irenic presentation of the view he should read this treatment by Moore. Using such key passages as 2 Samuel 7, Psalm 16, Psalm 110, and Acts 2 the progressives argue that when Jesus assumed the exalted position of His session at the right hand of the Father, He essentially is sitting on the throne of David as both Lord and Christ. Therefore, Jesus' current rule as the "head" of the church is the same as His rule as the "Messiah" of Israel. This is more than a mere spiritual form of the kingdom, it is the kingdom inaugurated.

For all of its emphasis on the "already" aspect of the Kingdom, progressives are adamant in their views that Jesus will rule on earth during a literal 1000 Kingdom. Geopolitical rewards to a reconstituted nation of Israel will be dispensed by the King as a prelude to the eternal state, the new heavens and new earth.

To Moore's delight there has been movement from the other side of the controversy, as has been mentioned above. In the second chapter he provides significant details about Kingdom Theology as it has developed among evangelical covenant amillennial and premillennial writers. While it seems the major concessions have come from dispensational thinkers, Moore believes that "modified" views on both sides have made this *rapprochement* possible.

In Chapter 3 Moore discusses another area in which coming together helps solve the problem of the uneasy conscience. Socio/political engagement by evangelicals will be more likely



when salvation is seen as both holistic and Christological. Moore traces the development of postwar evangelical soteriology as it is opposed by the liberal left which rejected fundamental notions of total depravity and substitutionary atonement. However, among those Christian theologians who retained Biblical convictions, there was a sense in which redemption was dichotomized into a heavenly, “spiritual” salvation of traditional covenant theology versus an emphasis on the cosmic purposes of God including the new earth. Older dispensational thinkers were thought to separate the spiritual salvation of the church from the material salvation of the nation of Israel. Regardless of how accurate this portrayal is, Moore suggests that the end result was the lack of social engagement by both extremes in evangelical theology.

Things are changing. Many have come to a centrist view on the holistic and Christological nature of soteriology. The emerging evangelical consensus of Kingdom Soteriology here runs parallel to the Kingdom Eschatology. Personal regeneration should lead to reforming societal problems. Moore shows how progressive dispensationalism is saying the same thing. It is clear as he traces the development that avoidance of the Social Gospel was paramount to earlier dispensationalists who would speak of manning the lifeboats rather than polishing the brass on the Titanic. However, Kingdom Soteriology does not distinguish between Kingdom purposes (of Israel) and salvation purposes (of the church). Political action, social action, and structural improvement of the human community serves to ease the uneasy conscience. It is a unified Kingdom concept and a unified salvation for one people of God that makes this possible.

In Chapter 4 the logical progression continues. If the Kingdom is already inaugurated, and if salvation includes both personal redemption and the cosmic purposes of redeeming the world, then the church has a mandate to engage in socio/political



concerns as a kingdom community. Moore mentions the development of evangelical seminaries reacting to the modernism of the liberal denominations. Both from the dispensational side and the Reformed covenantal side of the spectrum came trained pastors of churches and leaders of parachurch ministries. But lack of cohesion in ecclesiology added to the lack of strength in evangelical engagement with the world. Regardless of differing opinions, Moore argues that the Church is the Kingdom of God.

Again, the emphasis of Moore's book is that consensus is occurring as progressive dispensationalists and modified covenantalists honestly evaluate the weaknesses of their past proponents and embrace a Kingdom Theology which unifies genuine believers in a common cause that is true to the Word of God and the eschatological, soteriological, and ecclesiological purposes of God.

This work must be highly recommended for all who seek to understand the development of thought among evangelical theologians, especially from the post war era to the present. Moore successfully documents an incredible array of views that are both faithfully presented and carefully analyzed. While many have learned of these things in a piecemeal fashion, Russell Moore has organized the arguments and traced the trajectory of the subject matter in a way that excels other efforts to do so.

Clearly, all will not agree with the conclusions he draws, especially concerning the value or even the biblical defense of this growing consensus between progressive dispensationalism and modified covenantalism. Many will continue to ask if such thinking does not lead to a supersessionism that ignores the relevance of the "unbelieving" nation of Israel today. Some will not be satisfied with the terminology used to reconcile the different views. Others will ask about the role of the Holy Spirit in the already but not yet kingdom. Some will wonder what



limitations there are on kingdom ethics in the church of today. The questions will continue to be raised, but this contribution by Russell Moore will advance the discussion in a wonderful way.

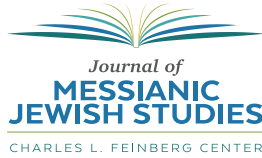


Appendix

The Journal of Messianic Jewish Studies



JMJS/CHARLES L. FEINBERG CENTER



Charles L. Feinberg Center for Messianic Jewish Studies

The *Charles L. Feinberg Center for Messianic Jewish Studies* in Brooklyn, New York is a partnership between Chosen People Ministries and Biola University's Talbot School of Theology. Several years ago, the leadership of Chosen People Ministries recognized a tremendous need within Messianic Judaism and Jewish missions for more seminary-trained leadership. Through this partnership with Biola University's Talbot School of Theology we were able to develop this cutting-edge new Master of Divinity program with an emphasis on Messianic Jewish Studies. After receiving accreditation through the New York Board of Regents and the Association of Theological Schools, we began classes in summer of 2007.

The Feinberg Center program contains 98 credits and awards a Master of Divinity degree in Messianic Jewish Studies from Talbot School of Theology. Our program is still the only one of its kind in the world; it offers unique coursework to prepare leaders for Jewish ministry as missionaries, Messianic congregational leaders, non-profit leaders, and educators. Three key components



of the program make it unique: the coursework, field ministry, and cost.

COURSEWORK

We have designed the curriculum for the Feinberg Center to incorporate both a typical Jewish studies program and an evangelical seminary program, while also catering each specific class towards the current needs of Jewish ministry. Each of our Jewish studies courses, like *Rabbinic Literature and Theology*, *Theology of the Siddur* (Jewish prayer book), and *Jewish History*, contains practical elements on how a better understanding of Jewish tradition can enhance our work in Jewish missions. Additionally, each of the traditional evangelical seminary courses, like *Pastoral Studies*, *Church History*, and *Apologetics*, provides a unique Jewish perspective for the context of Jewish ministry. Our professors are all excellent scholars with a long history of personal experience in Jewish ministry.

FIELD MINISTRY

We placed the Feinberg Center in New York City because it is the center of Jewish life in America. With close to two million Jewish people, the city provides endless possibilities for students to immerse themselves in Jewish culture and ministry while completing their coursework. In fact, each semester we organize various Jewish-focused field ministry programs to help each student put what they have learned in the classroom into practice.

We have designed the different field ministry opportunities to expose our students to several aspects of Jewish ministry over the course of their studies. These aspects include direct

evangelism, discipleship, leading Bible studies, Messianic congregation leadership, and non-profit administrative training. We also provide other unique projects each semester, such as our evangelistic Jewish holiday celebrations, interfaith benevolence projects, debates, and café-style youth outreaches. These numerous field ministry programs take students into several areas of New York City, including Manhattan, Queens, and Brooklyn.

COST

We established the Feinberg Center to provide our students an affordable education and give them the opportunity to graduate debt-free, enabling them to enter vocational ministry without the tremendous burden of student loans. To achieve this affordability, we offer a wide range of scholarships and subsidies to offset student costs. Not only is our tuition a quarter of what it would normally cost, we also provide student housing for single students and offer students with families a housing scholarship to make their rent affordable. The generous and regular support from our ministry partners makes an affordable education possible.

THE CHARLES L. FEINBERG MESSIANIC JEWISH CENTER – HISTORY, PURCHASE, AND PROGRAMS

While we have hosted classes for the Feinberg Center in our Manhattan administrative offices since it launched in the summer of 2007, we knew we would eventually need to find a larger and more suitable space to house the seminary. In 2010, as God continued to bless and develop the seminary, we began a search for the right facility to house the program—and the Lord miraculously provided the perfect location.



Brooklyn is home to more than 750,000 Jewish people, making this borough of New York City one of the highest concentrations of Jewish people in the United States. We discovered a building in Brooklyn that had previously functioned as a Jewish funeral home. This rare, 14,000 square foot facility, which provides three floors, a basement and a sanctuary on the first floor, is located in the heart of an Orthodox Jewish neighborhood. We thought it seemed too good to be true.

This facility gives us significant opportunities to expand our ministries. It sits right on the borders of Orthodox Jewish, secular Jewish, and Israeli communities. It is within an even larger neighborhood of Russian Jewish immigrants. We believe this facility provides unprecedented opportunities for evangelism, as there is no other Jewish ministry in the area. God has clearly placed us at the center of this key location.

After extensive renovation, the building floors allow the following functionality:

1st Floor – Sanctuary for Messianic Congregations, reception area, kitchen, and multi- purpose ministry room

2nd Floor – Three classrooms, study areas with computers, professor and missionary offices

3rd Floor – Separated living quarters for students, guest bedroom for visiting professors and missionaries

Basement – The 12,000-volume Feinberg Center Library

In addition to housing the seminary, the facility gives us increased ministry space. The sanctuary has allowed us to plant a new English-speaking Messianic congregation, along with hosting our current Russian-speaking congregation. The kitchen and multipurpose room has allowed us to host special meals and event, coupled with other benevolence work, like ESL classes

and addiction care ministries. As the only Jewish missions organization in the heart of this strategic area, we pray the Lord will continue to use this space for His glory.





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